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MARIE DERVILLE.

A Story of a French Boarding-School.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

MADAME GUIZOT DE WITT,

AUTHOR OF "MOTHERLESS," "A FRENCH COUNTRY FAMILY," ETC.

BY

MARY G. WELLS.

PHILADELPHIA:
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MARIE DERVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEPARATION.

"WAKE up, wake up, my darling!" cried Madame André Derville, as she drew aside the snowy white curtains of a little bed in which lay a pretty child, sleeping too soundly to hear the mother's greeting. Her curly black hair was spread ovet the pillow, her little hands were firmly clasped together above her head, and she did not stir until Madame Derville lifted her up and covered her face with kisses. Then she opened her eyes wide with a stare of surprise, but, recognizing her mother, the little one heaved a sigh of purest satisfaction, and, dropping her head again, slept more soundly than before. It seemed cruel to persist in arousing her, and Madame Derville had almost decided to lay her down, and prolong for a few hours more the child's happy unconsciousness of the sad parting which was at hand; but a glance at her husband changed her mind.

Captain Derville was a tall, robust man, his face bronzed by the exposure of many years to the winds and storms of a sailor's life. Now he sat by the fireside, his head bowed low between his hands, and his whole frame

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quivering with emotion, while he wept like a child. Suddenly he looked at his little Marie in her mother's arms, and although he could not command his voice sufficiently to speak, his glance said, "Bring her to me." Madame Derville softly crossed the room, and placed the child upon his knees.

The movement, however, awakened Marie, and she looked at her father's tears in utter amazement. "What is the matter, dear papa? Why do you cry?" she exclaimed; but recollecting in the next moment all that was about to happen, she herself answered her question. "Ah! I know; it is because you are going away." And she too began to weep.

Madame Derville did not shed a single tear. It was too soon; at this moment her only thought was to sustain the failing courage of her husband.

Captain Derville had made no voyages for eight years, having obtained, after a career full of adventure and of good service to his government, a situation in the War Department, where his experience and knowledge made him a valuable assistant. After his last cruise, he had married, and had been blessed with three lovely children; but two of these died in infancy, leaving only Marie, the eldest, who was now about six years old. Within a few weeks of the time when our story begins, Captain Derville had been offered, and was persuaded into accepting, the command of a superb new frigate, destined to proceed, so soon as equipped, to China, Japan, and other Eastern stations. It was a very tempting offer, for these were almost the only countries he had never visited; yet the prospect of a three years' separation from his wife and child appalled him; and

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after accepting the commission which pledged him to this long exile, he entered his house with a heavy heart, and so sad a countenance, that Madame Derville's suspicions were at once aroused. In answer to her eager questions, he pleaded, "How could I refuse? You know I can never gain my promotion, or reach the top of the ladder, if I stay always on shore. And then it has been the wish of my life to see China and Japan! But—— three years!" And he looked at his wife and at Marie, and sighed. Madame Derville sighed also; but she saw how all the old passion for the sea had sprung up afresh; how the love of adventure, of seeing new places, and of roaming over the wide and boundless ocean, animated his every look and tone. She knew how irksome had been his sedentary occupation at the War Bureau, and how all that he had appeared to forget during the past quiet years was now as fresh and vivid as of old; and she bravely kept back her tears, saying quickly and cheerfully, "Of course you must go, and I will wait at La Mivoie for you to come back."

And now the captain had brought his wife and Marie to La Mivoie, the modest, unpretending home of his father and mother, wishing to see them comfortably settled before his departure. Madame André Derville's own mother had, ever since she became a widow, lived with another daughter; and the good Jeanne determined to devote herself to the care of her husband's aged parents. Nothing pleased Marie better than to be at La Mivoie: from her birth, which occurred under its hospitable roof, she had reigned there, a little queen; and was known and loved by all the neighbors, old as well as young.

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The last night, even the last hour, had come; and as the poor father tenderly kissed the soft little cheek of his child, his heart sank within him. This voyage would gratify his dearest wishes: he had ardently desired it; but at the last his courage failed, and he murmured again and again, "Oh, it is hard! it is hard!"

Marie had stopped crying now; she sat very still on her father's knee, looking first at him and then at her mother, who was actively but silently occupied with some final preparations.

"You will be an admiral when you come back, will you not?" she asked, at length.

"Not quite an admiral, my darling, but on the way to it, I hope."

"But you have been on the way for a long time, papa. Mamma has been telling me about it ever since I was quite small."

"And you are so very large now!"

"Oh, yes, indeed! Just let me show you how tall I am!" And she sprang up with her little bare feet upon the captain's knee, and looking into the mirror, which reflected back her laughing face above his head, exclaimed, triumphantly, "See, see! I am taller than papa!" No one answered, and she slipped back again to her former resting-place, and began to chatter anew. "Be sure to bring me some of those beautiful shells you have told me of for my collection; and, papa," here she whispered confidentially into the captain's ear, "you know that in those countries where you are going the people sometimes get tired of their children and want to be rid of them. Now, if you should find a poor little Chinese girl with no one to take care of

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her, I want you to bring her home to play with me and be my sister."

The innocent words carried Madame Derville's thoughts away to the sister and brother whose loss Marie had been too young to feel, and her already sorely stricken heart was wellnigh overflowing; but she resolutely put away her own sorrow, and said, calmly, "André, surely it is time for you to go. I fear you may miss the train."

"I have still five minutes to spare," he replied; but Madame Derville saw how rapidly his courage was ebbing away, and she hastened to cut short the scene.

"Go quietly into your mother's room, dear André, and bid her good-by. I know she is awake, for I heard her moving; but I think your father still sleeps. He has had a miserable night."

Monsieur Derville was a confirmed invalid, and had been for several years confined to his room by the effects of a paralytic stroke. His faithful wife rarely left him, even for a few hours, and he was unwilling to accept the care or companionship of any one but herself. She had been unable to assist in the preparations for the captain's voyage, though, mother-like, she fancied no one could have packed his trunks so well. She was now anxiously watching for his appearance, and, as he entered the room, opened her arms to receive him, as she had done when he was a little child. Everything in the chamber looked as he remembered it from his earliest boyhood; not a piece of furniture had been changed; nothing new was there; and he knelt down beside his mother in the same spot and atti-

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tude in which, years ago, he had said his morning and evening prayer.

"God bless and keep you, my son!" said the mother, laying her hands affectionately upon his bowed head. "You must not awaken your poor father," she added, presently. "He has suffered much during the night, and it is best that he should not know the moment of your departure."

The captain pressed a silent kiss upon the old man's brow, then folded his mother in his arms for one last embrace, and left the room. The mother fell upon her knees, and prayed long and earnestly for his welfare and safe return.

During the interview with his mother, the captain had still kept the little Marie in his arms, and now he went down-stairs. At the open door stood Madame Derville, shivering in the cold, raw air of the early morning, but forgetful of everything so long as her husband was still near her. Marie was wrapped in a shawl which her mother had thrown round her as she was lifted from her bed, and the captain kept this closely around the little feet and hands, while he directed the arrangement of his luggage on the carriage which was to take him to the station. Once or twice he exclaimed, "Jeanne, pray go into the house,—you are so cold;" but she neither answered nor stirred.

In a few moments all was ready. The captain drew his wife into the little dining-room and strained her to his breast, folding her and Marie in one last fond embrace. The child was frightened by the sorrowful aspect of her parents,—she did not cry, but looked inquiringly from one to the other.

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At length Madame Derville said in a low but resolute voice, "God be with thee, my husband!" He tried in vain to speak; tore himself away, sprang into the carriage, and forcing himself to turn a deaf ear to the cries that burst from Marie, as she suddenly realized the fact of his departure, ordered the driver to hasten; in another moment he was gone.

As he vanished from her sight, Madame Derville's courage and calmness vanished also. After gazing for an instant after the departing carriage, she suddenly rose from her kneeling position near the window, and, seizing Marie in her arms, ran swiftly up-stairs into the attic. From its height she could still see the carriage as it rapidly became only a speck in the distance; but soon that too disappeared, and nothing met her view but clouds of dust and the solitary trees, already faded and yellow in the autumn wind. Then she burst into such a passion of tears, that Marie was filled with alarm. She clung to her mother, seeming to desire to comfort her, and soon, worn out by such unusual excitement, fell asleep in Madame Derville's arms. It was the weight of the weary little head resting on her bosom that brought back the desolate wife from the depth of misery into which that sad parting had plunged her; and as she rose to carry Marie once more to her bed, she felt as if awaking from a dreadful dream.

Marie aroused for an instant as her mother gently laid her down, and murmured, "I love you dearly, mamma;" adding, in a sleepy tone, "and papa, too." And as she listened, the mother's tears, though many, were less bitter than before.

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CHAPTER II.

PATIENCE.

La Mivoie, the home of the elder Dervilles, was a small, dark, old house; the rooms were narrow and rather gloomy, the furniture shabby and unattractive; but for all these deficiencies the garden made ample atonement. It was always beautiful: in the autumn and winter, no less than in the spring and summer; and to Marie it was a veritable Paradise,—an enchanted domain, wherein she reigned as absolute sovereign. Her chief delight was in a grotto of rock-work at the end of one of the long alleys. Almost hidden by the dense foliage, shaded by several ancient lindens, and covered with moss, it was for Marie a most charming retreat. Long ago, "when she was quite little," she could remember having seen the presiding deity of the grotto, an old wooden hermit; but even then he had lost an arm and part of his beard; and by the time Marie returned to pass the years of her father's absence at La Mivoie, the poor hermit had finished his days in the kitchen fire.

Now, however, she discovered in her beloved grotto a new inhabitant, more amusing and interesting than the hermit. In a heap of rubbish that was piled in one corner lived a toad; it very seldom came out in the daytime, but Marie chanced to see it one morning,

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and forthwith conceived an enthusiastic admiration and fondness for the ugly creature. Seating herself on a large mossy stone, to the great detriment of her pink dress, she entered into a lively conversation with her new acquaintance.

One must remember that she had neither brother nor sister, and, also, that it was an absolute necessity with her to talk. Talk she must, from morning till night; it mattered not of what, nor to whom. When she was only three years old, her grandmother's servant-woman, overwhelmed by the flood of words that nothing could stop, said, "Take care, Mam'selle Marie: if you talk so much, your tongue will be quite worn out by the time you are twenty, and then you will be dumb all the rest of your life."

This alarming prospect daunted the little chatterbox for a moment; she clambered up on a chair in front of the mirror and gravely pulled out her tongue, to look for some signs of the predicted decay; but quickly perceiving underneath the sharp, red, active little member the filaments that attached it to the palate, she cried out, triumphantly, "Never fear, Séraphine! When this tongue is used up I shall have a new one all ready! I can see it growing now!"

"Two tongues!" exclaimed Séraphine, in despair. "Heaven forbid!"

But Marie talked on, addressing, nowadays, a large share of her conversation to *her* toad, as she called it, and telling it all her secrets, as if it were a confidential friend. She had already a goat, several rabbits, a pet cat, and two dogs; but the toad was first favorite.

"Just out of perverseness," grumbled the old gar-

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dener who came once a week to La Mivoie, to attend to the kitchen-garden and weed the paths, "the child loves that ugly toad better than all the other creatures the good God has made; and one would not dare to kill it, for all the money in the world." The real truth was, that not for all the gold in the world would old Nicolas have done anything that could grieve Marie.

Unfortunately, Marie had another friend not favorably disposed, even for her sake, towards the toad. This was a magpie, Séraphine's special pet and property. She had rescued her from some boys who had taken a nest down from the great poplar-tree near the fountain in the village. The magpie was christened Margot, and held quite an important position in the household of La Mivoie. The old people, in particular, became really attached to the bird, and presented it with ceremony to the young Madame Derville on the occasion of her first visit. When Marie made her advent, she also accepted Margot as a family friend, and it was a favorite joke with her grandfather to try to tease the child by saying, "Ah, Marie, Margot knew the ways of the house long before you came." But, notwithstanding this rivalry, Marie loved the magpie, and it was Margot herself who interrupted their friendly relations.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried Marie one day, running to Madame Derville, who sat quietly at her work under the shade of the great pear-tree, "Margot is trying to hurt my poor Crapaudine [her pet name for the toad], and I am so frightened! Poor Crapaudine wishes to go back into her hole, but Margot is in front of it and will not let her pass; and I know she will not be satisfied

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until she has pecked out poor Crapaudine's eyes and made her as blind as herself!" Margot had lost one eye in a fierce battle with Phanor, the Angora cat. "That is the reason she talks so much," explained Marie, when to her own little chattering self was frequently applied the saying, "You talk as fast as a blind magpie." Marie fancied that Margot was forever lamenting over her lost eye.

Madame André Derville was far from sharing in Marie's love for Crapaudine; she had, indeed, an instinctive aversion to all insects and reptiles; but, seeing the child so excited, she rose and followed her. By this time the rout of Crapaudine was complete; but she had managed to escape into her hole, while Margot sat perched upon the rubbish-heap with a most warlike aspect. Marie called the victor, and was about to administer a grave rebuke, when suddenly Margot seemed to be struck with a new idea; she looked wisely at Marie for a moment, and then scampered off to the end of the garden, where her little Mentor sought her in vain.

Madame Derville returned to her work, and Marie followed, after scattering a liberal supply of bread-crumbs on the stones near Crapaudine's retreat. "She is so very fond of bread, mamma," said Marie. "Do you know that there is never a single crumb left in the morning?"

Madame André (as she was called to distinguish her from the elder Madame Derville) did not contradict the child; but old Nicolas, who was at work in the garden, overheard her, and said, laughing, "No, no, mam'selle,—the birds and the mice may eat your crumbs, but a toad eats only worms, and beetles, and all those

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villainous creatures that make so much trouble for me among my vegetables."

"Very well, then, Nicolas, you ought surely to love my dear Crapaudine very much, since she helps you so kindly."

To this triumphant speech old Nicolas could make no answer; but chuckling to himself at the ready wit of Crapaudine's little champion, he muttered, in a low voice, "The little one has always something to say!"

Madame André had laid down her work to follow Marie, and now her spool of thread had disappeared.

"You must have left it in the house, mamma," said Marie, who was amusing herself by capering over the grass on all-fours, gathering and making into little bunches the flowers within her reach.

"No," replied her mother, "I had almost finished the hem of your dress, and of course I could not have sewed so much with a single needleful."

"I do not see it anywhere among the grass, mamma; perhaps you put it into your pocket. Let me look." And the little hands, none too clean after their work in the grass, were already half-way into the pocket; but Madame André declined the search.

"No, there is nothing there but my keys and my handkerchief."

"And papa's last letter?"

"Yes, papa's last letter is always there."

"How is papa? Will he come home soon? Oh, no! I remember; I shall be quite tall by the time he comes. Shall I be as tall as you, mamma?"

"I hope not," replied her mother, sadly; but Marie did not hear. She had skipped down one of the alleys

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in search of the lost spool, and, not finding it, ran to the house to look for it in Madame André's work-box.

The next day Madame André's gold thimble was missing. This time she was working at the open window in her own room, and left it for a few moments while she went to give her morning greeting to Monsieur Derville. He was now confined entirely to his bed, and, since the departure of his son, had become weaker and weaker every day.

Madame André remained with him but a short time, and, on returning to her own room, missed her thimble immediately. A general search was instituted, but in vain. No one would acknowledge to having entered the room during her absence, yet she was confident that she had left the thimble on the table when she laid down her work. It was suggested that Marie had hidden it for mischief; but she said, indignantly,—

"Did I not *tell* you, mamma, at first, that I had not seen your thimble to-day?"

Her mother and grandmother required no further assurance; for them, Marie's simple word had always been enough; but old Séraphine, accustomed to the disregard of truth so common among the poor neglected children of her own class, was by no means convinced.

"Mam'selle Marie knows all about madame's thimble; as sure as this fine cabbage is going into my soup, she has hidden it for fun, and now she is afraid to tell."

Marie was deeply hurt by Séraphine's suspicions. "Oh, if I only *could* find that provoking thimble!" said she. And once more she dived into every possible

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and impossible lurking-place, but with no better success than before. And this was not the end of her perplexities. About this time an evil spirit seemed to have taken up its abode at La Mivoie; a thieving imp, apparently, for nothing was safe from its depredations. Soon after the disappearance of Madame André's gold thimble, Madame Derville's spectacles vanished mysteriously; then old Nicolas's garden-scissors; then Séraphine missed one of her ear-rings, which she had taken out because it hurt her. This was a sad grievance to the old woman; but her unhappiness culminated a few days later, when she came to announce, in melancholy tones, that one of madame's silver spoons was gone!

The stock of plate at La Mivoie was not large; the count was soon made, and it was seen that a spoon had indeed been spirited away. The little household exhausted conjecture as to the thief, and his motive for carrying off such small and comparatively valueless articles.

"It cannot be a professional robber," said Madame Derville, "for he would not be satisfied with such trifling plunder; he would take at once all my table-service."

"*I* believe," said Séraphine, "it is those good-for-nothing boys of Madame Robinet's. They are forever passing the house or running across the garden; and it would be easy enough for one of them to jump inside the window and snatch a spoon. I have just been scolding them well out there!"

"But, Séraphine, your ear-rings were up-stairs in your room; and Madame André's thimble was on her table; and my spectacles were in my book, far from the

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window. How could the poor little fellows have found all these things, even had they wanted to steal?" asked Madame Derville, just even in the midst of her amazement. And Séraphine could not persist in the accusation.

Finally, Madame Robinet rushed into La Mivoie one morning in a state of such excitement that she could scarcely compose herself to say "Good-morning" to her neighbors. "Pray tell me, madame," she found breath at last to exclaim, "have you lost anything lately?"

"Yes, indeed; we have lost several things."

"A pair of scissors? a pocket-knife? a spectacle-case?" pursued Madame Robinet, still breathless and excited.

"We have lost all those articles," answered Madame Derville, "and others also: I miss my spectacles, Nicolas his garden-scissors, and my daughter-in-law her thimble."

"And a silver spoon has gone, too," added Séraphine, rather pleased to have the opportunity of mentioning the family silver to Madame Robinet, who, in common with most of the neighbors, aspired to nothing more imposing than knives, forks, and spoons of iron or tin.

"Well," continued Madame Robinet, "my little boys tell me that on their way to school this morning——"

"They left all the gates open after them?" said Madame Derville, laughingly.

"They did not tell me that; but it seems they saw Margot flying and hopping about, carrying something

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in her beak which shone very brilliantly. As soon as the children came home and told me of this, I hastened to tell you also. For several days past we have missed small articles, but, supposing the little ones had carried them off in their play, I paid no special attention to the loss; but now that it has come to silver spoons being stolen——" Here Madame Robinet was forced to pause for breath, and at the same moment Marie ran in, full of news.

"Oh, grandmother, what do you think! Crapaudine has in her hole two lovely, beautiful little toads! I have been wondering why she would not come out since Margot frightened and treated her so badly, and I thought I would go and pet her. I pulled away the stones, and there were these dear little creatures. Crapaudine was so good,—she did not hiss at me, as she does at Margot, but let me touch her children when I wished to do so. Of course I did not hurt them, but put them back gently into the hole, and Crapaudine lay down by their side."

Madame Robinet's eyes grew larger and rounder than ever, as she stared at Marie in utter astonishment. "Is it possible, my dear, that you play with toads?"

"Until to-day I never had but one, but now I have three!" cried Marie, dancing for joy. "Oh, how good it was of Crapaudine to let me touch the little ones! And there was that naughty Margot in the grotto, thrusting her beak in among the stones, trying to find poor Crapaudine's hole. But Crapaudine is safe now: she has hidden herself under the largest stone in the heap!"

Madame Robinet turned quickly round. In her

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eager desire to discover the thief who had stolen the silver spoon, she forgot her horror at Marie's playing with so venomous a creature as a toad. "Madame Derville," she exclaimed, hastily, "we must go immediately to the grotto!—Margot has doubtless selected it as a hiding-place, and was busily engaged, when Marie saw her, in secreting some of the stolen goods."

And now the whole family, with the exception of poor Monsieur Derville, went in procession to the grotto. "Where are you all going, Ernestine?" he asked, when his wife, anxious as the rest to recover the missing property, begged him to allow her to leave him for a few moments. While she was telling him in few words of the doubts that had been cast upon Margot's probity, a shout of triumph arose from the garden, and in a moment Marie ran into the room, wild with excitement.

"Oh, grandpapa!" she cried, "we have found Margot's hiding-place! I remembered the very spot where I had seen her perch a little while ago; and there were grandmother's glasses, and the silver spoon, and a great many other things. The spectacle-case is rather mouldy, from having been in that damp hole so long. Madame Robinet lifted the stones, and mamma put in her hand. Séraphine was afraid of snakes, so mamma took everything out, and she is bringing her apron full to show you. I do hope the noise of so many people did not frighten poor Crapaudine,—I am afraid she thought we had come to take away her children."

As Marie finished her tale, Madame André, Madame Robinet, Séraphine, Nicolas, and two or three little

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Robinets, who appeared suddenly upon the scene, all entered Monsieur Derville's room, that he too might enjoy the grand discovery. Madame André poured out upon the table the contents of her apron.

"Oh, there is mamma's spool!" cried Marie.

"And my ear-ring!" joyfully exclaimed Séraphine.

Then Nicolas's scissors came forth.

"One would think Margot had planned to set up as a cutler!" said the small boys, pouncing with intense satisfaction upon their lost knives.

After each individual at La Mivoie had claimed his or her own property, a number of articles still remained, which were carried to their various owners in the neighborhood.

It seemed that Margot had begun her pilfering long before, but that until recently she had discriminated in favor of La Mivoie. Madame André's spool had at last proved too strong a temptation, and, after appropriating it, she had gone on stealing right and left, whenever and wherever the opportunity presented itself.

"Now you will of course wring the neck of this miserable creature," said Madame Robinet, who was greatly vexed at finding her precious work-box almost ruined by the damp and mould of Margot's *cachette*.

"No, let us shoot her with papa's gun," suggested the eldest Robinet. "I know how to load it."

"Be quiet, you dunce!" whispered his brother, nudging his elbow. "Do you want mamma to find out that we have been using the gun?"

Madame Derville now announced herself to be judge and jury, and decreed that "the accused is sentenced

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to imprisonment for life in a cage, hung before the kitchen door."

"So that she will not find the cage too tiresome, I suppose," said Marie, who began to pity Margot in her hour of misfortune. Indeed, she had never taken the thefts so much to heart as Margot's enmity towards Crapaudine.

"She will not find the cage tiresome very long," said the boys, as they went home; "she will die soon."

And they were right. Poor Margot, accustomed to unlimited liberty, to a vagabond life, and to foraging for her daily food, could not endure existence between the bars of a cage; her brilliant black plumage assumed a dismal gray tint; her tail dragged heavily against the narrow bars; she neither cried nor talked any more. Sometimes, when Marie offered her a piece of sugar, or Phanor stretched himself in the sun in front of the cage, as if to bid defiance to the poor prisoner, a plaintive cry was heard, but that was all.

One morning Marie appeared in her grandmother's room with eyes red from weeping. Margot had died in the night.

"I wish she were still hopping about where I might see her," said old Monsieur Derville, who was really attached to the bird; "some one could have looked after the glasses and the spoons, even if she did carry them off."

"We might have forgiven her stealing from ourselves," replied Madame Derville; "but she stole also from our neighbors."

And we must admit that Margot's sentence was a just one.

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CHAPTER III.

AN INVITATION.

It must not be supposed that Marie played all the time. A portion of each day was devoted to her education; and she invariably answered, when asked whether she was learning to read, "Oh, yes; I have to work at it all day long." Still, she was always a little embarrassed by the question; for, although she was *learning* to read, she was now six and a half years old, —"nearly seven," Madame André said,—and certainly did not know how to read.

Nothing in the world so abashed and humiliated her as the occasional visits made by her grandmother to the school in the village. Madame Derville always took Marie with her, saying, "It does the child good to look at young faces sometimes;" but Marie would have been more than willing to stay at home. She was not at all jealous of the wonderful specimens of penmanship exhibited so proudly by the best scholars in the writing-class. "I am much smaller than they," she said to herself. "When I am large, of course I shall write as well, and much faster, too. They are so slow over their copies, one would think they were drawing pictures!" But when the reading-class, composed of children of her own age, was called up, it was not so easy to console herself. "I do not think their reading

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sounds so very well, grandmother," she would say. "They do not pronounce as mamma does."

"Nevertheless they *can read*," replied Madame Derville, quietly; and poor Marie was silenced.

Her history-lesson was a heavy burden to her, and she contracted a habit of inventing as she went along. "Pray let me say it in my own words, mamma; I can go on so much faster."

"If you would only learn to read, my dear Marie," patiently replied her mother, "you would have no trouble. I am not obliged to guess and to invent, as you are, because I can read exactly what is written in the book."

"Oh, *you*, mamma; that is quite different!"

At last an old grammar was adopted as a reading-book, and poor Marie, unable to guess any longer, found her lessons more and more tedious. Only her reading-lessons tired her, however, because she was so unsuccessful with them. She was deeply interested in geography. "I want to know the name of every country to which papa is going," said she, and worked her pretty little mouth into every variety of contortion as she tried to pronounce the odd names in China and Japan. "You will see that I shall be able to talk well with papa when he returns," she often said to her mother, who only sighed.

Captain Derville should by this time have arrived at the first port he had intended to touch, but as yet there were no letters from him.

"Seven months since he left us!" said poor Madame André, as with tears she counted over the days of his absence.

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Marie rushed into her arms, covering her face with kisses; and Madame Derville said, cheerfully,—

"Yes; seven months of the time have passed. His return is nearer by seven months." And Madame André's smiles chased away her tears.

It was unfortunate that she was obliged to lead a comparatively idle life. Madame Derville was so executive, so active, so accustomed to regulate entirely not only hér own affairs, but often those of her neighbors, that Madame André had not even a faint pretext for trying to assist the old lady in her daily cares and occupations. In the morning she superintended Marie's toilette, gave her some short lessons (which the young scholar described as "very long"), then a little necessary sewing and mending were attended to, and afterwards there was a long, quiet day, during which Marie played in the garden, while her mother read—or dreamed. Very often she passed hours under her favorite pear-tree, her hands clasped listlessly in her lap, and her large eyes gazing vaguely into space.

"What do you think about when you sit still so long, mamma?" Marie asked at such times, knowing well that the answer would be, "I am thinking of your papa."

Then Madame André would rouse herself, embrace Marie, and open the book which had perhaps lain idly at her side for hours.

She was the daughter of a professor of rhetoric in one of the Paris lyceums, and had received an excellent, solid education. Her father had lost his only son, and comforted herself by bringing up his daughter like a boy.

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"I used to work as hard as any man," said Madame André, after her marriage.

"So much the better," replied Madame Derville; "you will be the more able to teach your sons."

But as yet Marie had received all the lessons alone. "I wonder," she said, sometimes, "whether Sophie and André have lessons to learn in heaven?"

The child was never weary of talking about this sister and brother in heaven, whom she could, however, only just remember. One day in Paris, Madame André found her busily occupied in arranging at the window a theatre of puppets which had been given her by a friend of her father. The captain's rooms were on the fifth story, where one could catch a glimpse of the sky.

"What are you doing, Marie?" said Madame André. "Be careful, or your actors will fall from the window."

"I am making them play for the good God up in heaven," gravely replied Marie; "and Sophie and André can look at them too, if they like."

As time went on, Marie found her mother more and more frequently in a dreamy, preoccupied state, and she often took advantage of it to "sit down and have a good talk." Madame Derville sat almost always in her husband's room, and she often smiled as she heard, through the open window, the child's clear voice, rarely interrupted by the gentle tones of her mother.

"Poor Jeanne must be weary of the little one's incessant talking," said the grandmother.

"Were you ever tired of your children's chattering?" asked Monsieur Derville.

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"Yes, indeed; very often." But she sighed as her thoughts flew away to the two bright boys and the cherished young daughter who had gone before her into a heavenly home. Then she went down to call Marie and prevent her from "wearing her mother out."

The child loved her grandmother dearly, but she was unwilling to be restrained in her delightful one-sided conversation. "Do I really tire you, dear mamma?" she asked, as she left the room.

Madame André shook her head, and could not always answer, "No;" but she had ever a loving, tender look for Marie.

One morning, while Marie still slept, Madame Derville entered her room, and aroused her, saying, "Jump up quickly, my child; there is a grand treat in store for you to-day. Madame Robinet is down-stairs, and invites you to go with her and the children, who have a holiday, to the forest."

Marie sprang out of bed, and began to put on her stockings with one hand, while with the other she rubbed her sleepy eyes. "And what will mamma do while I am gone?" said she.

"Mamma will be glad to stay quietly at home; she is tired, and will enjoy the rest."

Marie pouted a little when she heard this, but soon recovered her good humor, and dressed herself with all possible expedition. In her haste she was running down-stairs in total forgetfulness of her prayers. Her grandmother called her back, and, kneeling down, she offered her accustomed morning petition, saying to herself, in a low voice, "Could I really forget to ask the good God to take care of papa to-day?"

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Madame Robinet rushed towards Marie as she entered the room below, picked her up as if she were a feather, and would have carried her off, literally, had not Marie resisted, assuring her amiable friend that she could walk very well and very quickly. They went together to Madame Robinet's house, and found all the children assembled at the door, impatiently awaiting the arrival of their mother and Marie.

"Does it always take you so long to dress?" they cried.

"Long! why, I never dressed so quickly before in all my life, and mamma says that never in my life have I gone out with my hair in such an untidy state!"

The boys looked mischievously at their sisters. "Louise and Césarine have taken less trouble with their hair than you." Which was indeed the case.

The young girls blushed; but there was no time for a more careful toilette, and the merry party crowded into the cart, where the provisions were already safely placed. Each of the boys begged for the honor of driving, but Madame Robinet prudently kept the reins in her own hands, and the old horse carried the party slowly but steadily along the road that led to the forest.

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CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE.

AFTER a pleasant ride, the party reached the wood. The horse was unharnessed and allowed to browse peacefully on the fresh, green grass, and the children, like little prisoners set free, raced, danced, laughed, and sang in the fullness of their glee. The boys began to show their agility in climbing trees, and their sisters followed close behind. Marie, however, drew back from this amusement. It had once been a great delight to her, but, after practicing in private for some time, she had essayed to climb a tree in the garden at La Mivoie; it proved treacherous, broke beneath her weight, and allowed her to fall to the ground, with hands and face sadly scratched. Her grandmother reproved her severely, telling her that such sports were only for boys, and, desiring to impress the rebuke on her memory, ordered Séraphine to give her nothing but dry bread for supper.

"Was it so very wicked, mamma?" asked Marie, thinking much more of her grandmother's reprimand than of the fall.

"No, my child; it was not *wicked* at all. But grandmamma was right. Women never climb trees; and little girls, who will one day become women,

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should habituate themselves in youth to the customs of their sex."

"Their sex!" Marie repeated the words in a bewildered tone, but presently exclaimed, "Oh, yes, I know. There are three sexes,—men, women, and children. Well, mamma, you see I am nothing but a child."

Madame André could not help laughing; but the occasion was never forgotten by Marie, and she climbed no more trees.

Before the children had played an hour, they were clamorous for their feast, and Madame Robinet began to look for a fit spot to lay the cloth. It was only ten o'clock in the morning, and she had given her little flock quite a substantial repast of soup and a haricot before leaving home; but this was forgotten now, and they were all, to use their own words, "dying of hunger." Marie said nothing, although she was in a really famished state. She had dressed and set out in so much haste, that the thought of breakfast had not occurred to her; and now she watched Madame Robinet's preparations eagerly, though more quietly than her young companions.

Denis, the oldest boy, after running hither and thither to find "the very best place," begged his mother to go to one particular spot some distance farther on. "You can sit in the shade, mamma, at the edge of the wood, and we shall play in the field beyond. The grass is newly mown, and there are twenty haymakers at work piling it into cocks. Perhaps they will let us help, and we shall have grand sport."

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Denis was the spoiled child of the family, and led his mother where he pleased; his brothers and sisters complained, but had learned that he generally succeeded in having his own way: so in a few moments the whole party was again in motion.

A short ramble brought them to the spot selected by Denis. The hamper was unpacked, and the hungry children sat round it in a circle upon the grass, ready to do full justice to its contents. The entertainment was served in the most primitive style. There was no cloth, nor were plates and forks forthcoming. As one article after another was snatched from the hamper and placed on a large napkin, which constituted the whole table-service, each child seized its own portion and disposed of it with the aid of fingers or a pocket-knife. It was Marie's first experience of such a meal, and, hungry as she was, she scarcely knew how to proceed. But before venturing to begin on the large piece of cold veal allotted to her by Madame Robinet, she took out her little white pocket-handkerchief and spread it carefully upon her lap.

This innocent precaution awakened the mirth of the boys, and they commenced to laugh and to tease her unmercifully. "You see, she cannot eat without a napkin; yet this is the way the sailors eat on her father's ship!"

"Yes," added Césarine, "and the captain does the same, I make no doubt."

"Not at all!" cried Marie, indignantly. "I know nothing about the sailors,—I am not a sailor,—even if they do eat as you say; but I know papa dines in his

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own cabin with his officers, and he has a cook, too, named Master Coq."

This remark of Marie's seemed to incite her companions to a fresh outburst. They pretended to be entirely overcome, and rolled about on the ground in a fit of laughter. Denis kicked over the salad that his mother had just put upon the table, and Louise ran off to wash it again in the little brook. "Co-co-ri-co!" shouted Denis; "Ki-ki-ki-ki-kik!" chimed in his brother; "Mamma, when we go home you must catch our old yellow cock and make a cook of him! That will save you and Rosalie a great deal of trouble!"

Marie was now very angry. "What I tell you is true!" she exclaimed. "Because you have never seen a ship, and know nothing about it, you laugh like idiots."

"And have you ever seen one yourself?" demanded Césarine, firing up in her turn.

"No, I have not exactly *seen* one, but papa has told me all about it."

At this point the return of the salad distracted the attention of the youthful combatants, and the quarrel was dropped. There was no fork with which to turn it over, and Denis must prepare two little sticks for the purpose. Marie had often heard her grandmother tell how, in her young days, the highest ladies in the land did not scruple to handle the salad at table with their delicate little fingers; but, as she looked at Madame Robinet's great red hands, she was very willing to wait while Denis cut and peeled his two sticks from a hazel-tree that grew near.

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When the feast was over, Madame Robinet said, "Now I have all to pack up again!"

"That will not take long, mamma," answered the children; "for we have nothing left but the bones, pieces of paper, two plates, some glasses, and one napkin."

"To be sure, there are the knives," said Denis; "but mine is all cleaned and put away in my pocket."

Marie had already watched with much interest the knife-cleaning process, which consisted in plunging the knife several times into the earth up to the handle, "to keep it from rusting," as Denis explained. Marie promised herself the pleasure of trying the same system upon her own little ivory-handled knife, which was always rusty and generally missing.

All the children now scampered away to the hay-field,—Marie distinguishing her *début* by first putting her foot into a rabbit-hole and afterwards measuring her length upon the ground; but she quickly recovered herself, and ran along with the rest to the part of the field where the haymakers were at work. They were as yet only making preparations for the haycocks, and the boys lamented, loudly, "We shall be gone before the hay is piled up." Nevertheless, they joined in the work with alacrity, and dragged along great heaps of grass; while Marie, Louise, and Césarine raked away behind with all their strength.

The farmer saw with pleasure this little army of recruits, whose good will made up for their want of force. Passing near them, he heard Denis say, for the twentieth time, "It is *such* a pity that we cannot make one single mow!"

The farmer stopped, and said, good-naturedly, "If

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you really wish it so much, suppose you all run down to that end of the meadow, where the grass must be almost entirely dry. If you can get it stacked up, it will be doing me a great service; for the sky yonder looks rather threatening." And he watched anxiously the rapidly-darkening clouds, which in two distinct currents seemed to cross and recross each other directly over his head. "Two winds! That is unlucky for me!" he said to himself, and hastened back to urge his workmen to use the greatest possible dispatch.

The children, who had scampered away at the farmer's bidding to the end of the meadow, required no urging. By common consent, Marie was chosen to shape the haycock.

"Am I heavy enough?" she asked, rather alarmed by the responsibility of her position. She had lived in Paris for three years, and had never seen the operation of haymaking.

Denis solemnly invested her with a pitchfork, and placed her in the middle of the heap of grass already gathered. "You have only to keep walking round and round," said he. And Marie began her walk with slow and dignified step. Fortunately, the stack was not a very high one; but it was sufficiently elevated to give poor Marie, as she found herself trampling down the grass at a greater and greater distance from the ground, an uneasy fear lest she should not be able to descend safely. Just as she was about to appeal to Denis to know if it were not nearly finished, he called to her,—

"Now, Marie, let yourself slide down: I have here just enough grass for the cap." Then, seeing her hesi-

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tate, he added, "Don't be afraid: I will catch you in my arms."

Marie was not fond of Denis. His rough manners, and awkward attempts at joking, often annoyed her; still, she knew he was both strong and good-natured and could be depended upon to help her down in safety: so, gathering all her courage and closing her eyes, she glided down into his arms. He greeted her with a loud kiss. "It is my right, you know. The head-mower is always paid thus." Marie was indignant; but the others only laughed, and she said nothing; but she took out her handkerchief and carefully wiped the cheek that Denis had kissed, before she ran away with Louise and Césarine.

The farmer was too busy as they hurried past him to do more than call out, "Many thanks, my little workers!"

He and his men were dreading the storm, which now gathered rapidly; and Madame Robinet, who had already put the horse into the cart, was anxiously waiting the children's return. "Jump quickly into your seats," she exclaimed, as they reached her, panting and weary, "and let us get out of the wood before the storm breaks. We must not be here when the thunder and lightning begin."

Seeing his mother pale and trembling, and delighted to have the opportunity of becoming charioteer, Denis took the reins, without remonstrance from Madame Robinet, and drove with all possible speed towards the village. They were too late, however, to escape: the thunder roared, the sky was black, except when illuminated by sharp flashes of lightning, and the rain poured

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in torrents, by the time the terrified party emerged from the shelter of the trees and took the homeward road.

"I wish there were trees over us all the way," said poor Marie, as she crouched in the bottom of the cart, drenched by the rain, from which she was protected only by a thin cambric dress.

"Cover Marie with a shawl," cried Denis, from the driver's seat. But, alas! the morning had been so bright and sunny, that no one had thought of taking shawls or wraps of any kind.

"Marie is no worse off than the rest of us," grumbled Césarine, who was a little jealous of Denis's thoughtfulness for Marie; but Louise drew the poor child close to her, and gave her what covering her own damp skirts could afford.

Madame Robinet scarcely noticed the rain: she cared very little for the wetting: a good fire and change of garments would soon remedy all that; she heard nothing but the thunder and saw nothing but the lightning. Occasionally she shut her eyes, and put her fingers into her ears, when a more vivid flash or a louder peal almost deprived her of her senses; but she could not speak. She heaved a sigh of satisfaction when they left the forest, and Denis, though not at all frightened, was also relieved. His country experience had taught him the danger of being under the trees during such a storm, and he said to himself, as he urged the horse on, "It is better that we should be soaked by the rain than struck by the lightning, as we might have been yonder."

Unfortunately, it soon became evident that the horse was nearly as much frightened as Madame Robinet.

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He shuddered and jumped aside at every object within sight,—a haycock, or a heap of stones. "You are a stupid old Don Quixote! do you think a heap of stones will bite you?" said Denis, aloud; but he muttered to himself, "If he should see a wheelbarrow, we are lost: in this humor he will mind neither bit nor reins." Like many others of his race, Don Quixote could not endure the sight or sound of a wheelbarrow.

Denis looked carefully along the road, keeping anxious watch over every distinguishable object, and trying, at the same time, to calm his mother's fears. The rain poured in a deluge, and he could with difficulty see farther than twenty paces before him. Suddenly a brilliant flash of lightning illuminated the whole landscape, and there, at the side of the road, was a laborer hastening to find shelter from the storm. At the moment the cart reached him he overturned his wheelbarrow, left it, and ran swiftly on.

Don Quixote heard and saw even sooner than his young master. He made one leap to the side, to avoid passing closer to his enemy, and then, shaking his head, off he trotted, or rather galloped, at a pace he had certainly never in his life displayed before. "This would be the day to show him to a buyer," Denis could not help saying to himself in the midst of his fright; but there was no time to think of buying and selling now. He put forth all his strength to hold in Don Quixote, and it was all required. His hands were soon in wheals from the pressure on the reins, but, with shoulders against the back of the seat, and feet planted firmly on the splash-board, he held bravely on. He heard the little girls crying behind him, but only exclaimed, earn-

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estly, two or three times, "Keep perfectly still, all of you! Do not move an inch! Mamma, don't let one of them think of jumping out!" Fortunately, his terrified passengers still preserved sufficient command of their senses to know that their only chance of safety was in obeying his injunctions, and they all lay in a heap in the bottom of the cart, jolted almost to death by the rapid, uneven motion, weeping and wailing, but not attempting to disobey by trying to escape.

Madame Robinet was very quiet: she no longer uttered cries of terror, or hid her face in her hands; the serious and imminent danger in which she found herself and the children made her oblivious of her previous fears. Almost as soon as Don Quixote set out on his flight, Madame Robinet climbed to the driver's seat, beside Denis, and would have endeavored to assist him with her own strong hands, but he begged her to desist; and she sat quietly at his side, feeling that he would do all that could be done for their safety. She was very pale, but perfectly calm and collected, and she prayed to God, in her heart, as she was carried helplessly along.

"It seems to me that we are not going quite so fast," said Marie, from her corner. She had heaped a little pile of straw around her, and lay very still; indeed, she was the only one inside not quite exhausted by crying.

"On the contrary, we are going faster than ever," said Césarine, determined not to admit a ray of hope. "We shall soon be thrown out and killed, every one!"

At this gloomy announcement Louise wept bitterly;

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but the boys comforted her by saying, "Marie is right; we are coming to a hill now, and Don Quixote will not be able to keep up this pace; if he tries it, he will very soon be blown."

They had indeed arrived at the foot of a steep, wooded hill, which in olden times was named "The Den of Thieves," because many travelers had been attacked by robbers in this lonely spot, where, unable to urge their horses to a rapid pace, they fell an easy prey to the highway-robbers. Don Quixote was also forced to slacken his pace, as the ascent became more and more difficult; but before he reached the top of the hill he prepared to resume his former speed. Luckily, the town was built on this high ground, and M. Robinet's house was at the very entrance of the village. Don Quixote dashed on towards his stable, and all was safe at last.

It was time. Denis had not flinched for a single instant while the danger lasted. With steady hand and watchful eye he had managed to guide, and in a measure to control, the frightened horse, but he felt now that he had overtasked his strength. It seemed to him that his arms would fall useless in another instant; he could no longer distinguish the road; but by a supreme effort of will he succeeded in turning Don Quixote, now breathless and subdued, into the yard of his own home. He was so weak and exhausted that he found himself unable to descend from his seat; and Madame Robinet called for Rosalie, a stout, robust serving-woman, to come and help unload the carriage. First, however, they unharnessed the horse, not without fear that he might start off again in a new access of terror. The

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thunder still rumbled in the distance, but the rain had fortunately ceased.

A great fire was speedily lighted, to the joy of the dripping children; their wet clothing was quickly removed and replaced by dry, warm garments. Denis was at once comfortably tucked away in bed; and Marie, dressed in one of Césarine's old frocks, ran home, saying to herself, as she tripped across the garden, "How frightened mamma and grandmother must have been about me when the storm came up!"

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CHAPTER V.

THE ARRIVAL.

MARIE found no one in the kitchen when she entered, and she ran up the little wooden staircase that led to her mother's chamber on the second floor. Her legs trembled a little still, but she held to the baluster, and hurried on, impatient to recount her adventures to "mamma." But she was astonished, as she was about to pass her grandfather's door, to see it standing open, and the infirm old man sitting on the threshold in his cushioned chair. She had been brought up to pay the utmost attention and deference to the invalid, and she dared not pass by, although she could not bear the thought of telling her wonderful tale to any one before "mamma." But she said, "Have you found your room too warm, dear grandfather, that you have come out here?" She would then have hastened on, but Monsieur Derville took her arm and said,—

"Come very quietly, and knock at your mamma's door before you go in."

Marie disengaged herself from his grasp in a flash. "Mamma must be ill!" she cried, piteously. "I am *never* obliged to knock at her door!" And the poor child, agitated and excited by the events of the day, and almost heart-broken at the idea of a possible ill that had befallen her mother during her absence,

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trembled from head to foot; but, in obedience to Monsieur Derville's direction, she paused before her mother's door and knocked.

She heard steps within the room, and then, not her mother, but her grandmother, opened the door. "Be very quiet, my child," were the first words she uttered, before Marie had time to speak. "Do not make the slightest noise or disturbance. Come and give your dear mamma one kiss, and then I will show you the little brother God has sent you."

Marie grew red and white by turns. "A little brother!" She repeated the words over and over, but they conveyed no distinct meaning to her mind. She allowed herself to be led gently to the bedside, kissed her mother, without even asking if she were ill, and turned away silently, as if stupefied. On the other side of the room, Séraphine mounted guard over a cradle. Madame Derville drew aside the curtains and showed to Marie the tiny baby within. She stooped down, gazed at it long and earnestly, and finally said, in a tone of disappointment, "How very red it looks!" Then, in a quick, low whisper, as if afraid that her mother might overhear and resent the question, she asked, "Will it never be any prettier than it is now?"

Madame Derville smiled, but Séraphine indignantly closed the curtains, exclaiming, in a low tone, "Prettier than now! He is already beautiful as an angel!"

Madame Derville took Marie upon her lap, and whispered confidentially into her ear, "Do not think he will be ugly, my darling. He is sure to be pretty after awhile, because even now, we think, he looks very much like your dear mamma."

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"And I look like papa," responded Marie, quite cheerfully; "so that will be all right. Has he a name, grandmother? What shall I call him?"

"His name is Jean," her grandmother replied. And, leading Marie again to the cradle, she made her admire the baby's pretty little hands and rosy finger-nails, and the few stray locks of nearly black hair that were visible under its cap.

Marie's face grew bright, and she exclaimed, "How glad papa will be that we have a little baby! But he will not hear about it for *so* long. Poor papa! I hope, grandmother, that God will let Jean stay with us until papa comes home, and not take him away to see Sophie and André in heaven."

Marie's admiration for the little new-comer was becoming more intense every moment, and she now imprinted such an affectionate kiss upon its cheek that it uttered a feeble cry, which was at once heard by Madame André.

"Pray bring him to me," she said. And Madame Derville carried the infant to its mother. Before Marie had spoken of the children who were gone, her mother also had prayed that the little Jean might at least be spared until her husband's return; yet, as she remembered how soon she had been called on to part with her precious Sophie and André, she hardly dared to hope.

Madame Derville read all her fears in her face, and, as she placed the little Jean at his mother's side, she said, encouragingly, "Have no fears, my daughter, for your son: with God's help we shall make a fine man of him."

"Yes," murmured the poor mother, "if it be God's will!"

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"Can you not trust in him, my Jeanne?" And, as she spoke, her strong faith and loving confidence in the great Father shone out like an illuminating beam over her aged face, and the younger, feebler woman was inspired by the sight. She was comforted and strengthened; one hand supported the little Jean, and she gave the other to Marie, who covered it with kisses. The mother cast aside her fears, and all was peace and joy in the little household.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE DEPARTURE.

JEAN improved rapidly in looks and in size. "He grows as fast as a mushroom!" said Séraphine, who was constantly finding pretexts to desert her kitchen and spend a few moments in Madame André's room. According to her story, Jean required not only the devoted affection, but the unceasing personal service, of the whole family. Madame André, who was slowly recovering her strength, and whose heart overflowed with happiness and gratitude to God, used to smile when Séraphine came with her offers of assistance.

"No, thanks," was Madame André's invariable reply; "he really needs nothing at all, and, with Marie here to run my errands, I have no chance to tire myself."

One of the great events of baby's life was his daily bath. Not for the world would Madame André have deputed this duty to another, and Marie also looked forward with great interest to assisting at the ceremony. She always stationed herself beside the bathing-tub, laughing and playing with the water, assuring Madame André, after the floor was thoroughly splashed and wetted, "You see I must amuse Jean, mamma, to keep him good-natured while you are bathing him."

"He is rather too young yet to be amused," replied

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her mother. "He knows and cares for nothing but eating and sleeping. See, the little rogue is asleep already!" Jean, having taken his accustomed refreshment, had dropped off into a nap.

"He is just like Cybèle's puppies," said Marie. "She has three little ones in the dog-house. If any one touches them, they growl like this" (imitating to the best of her ability the cry of the puppies). "They too eat and sleep, and eat and sleep again, and Cybèle is *so* cross if one even looks at them!"

Marie did not think it necessary to mention the bite with which Cybèle threatened her when she attempted to put the blind little creatures upon the grass, "to try whether they could walk without seeing their way."

"You know that *I* am never very cross," said Madame André, as she softly placed Jean in his cradle; "but if you should ever torment the baby as you sometimes tease Cybèle's puppies, I should be obliged to punish you very severely."

Marie reddened. No shadow of jealousy had ever entered her heart since the arrival of baby Jean; she had given him a sincere welcome, and felt that he had come to fill up the void left by the death of Sophie and André. She had submitted very amiably to the temporary exile from her mother's chamber, and willingly yielded her favorite seat on her lap to the newly-born brother. But now she was filled with wrath, to find that she was considered capable of "tormenting" Jean. Her eyes filled with angry tears as she exclaimed, "Mamma!" Then, in a gentler tone, she said, "Do you not know, mamma, that I love my brother just as well as you do?"

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The mother smiled, but gathered the little girl tenderly to her heart. What could the child know of a mother's love? "Now, Marie," said Madame André, holding her daughter still upon her knee, "I ought to give you a reading-lesson. A whole month has passed since you last read to me, and I am sadly afraid you have forgotten all you ever knew."

Marie laughed merrily, but made no objections. She opened a New Testament that lay on the table beside her mother, and, without allowing Madame André to point her fingers along the lines, according to her custom, Marie read, clearly and intelligently, the first verses of the Sermon on the Mount.

"You have learned it by heart to surprise me," said her mother, leaning over her shoulder. "That was well done. Can you repeat any more of it?"

Marie continued to read, then opened the book several chapters farther on, reading as easily as before, but her voice began to tremble from excitement.

"Can it—*can* it be that you have really learned to read, my dear child?" asked her mother, charmed, but almost bewildered. And, taking the book from Marie's hands, she kissed her again and again.

"Yes! yes! I *have* learned to read!" cried Marie, jumping from her mother's lap and dancing across the room in her happiness. "I *truly* can read! Grandmother said I should not be able to keep my secret, but I have kept it well! You could never have guessed it, could you, mamma? All this time that you have stayed in your room, grandmother has been giving me four lessons every day! At first I read a little in bed each morning; then, as soon as grandmother could leave her

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room without awakening grandpapa, she came to give me a lesson. Oh, mamma, I had to pay attention, I assure you! If I turned my head even, grandmother threatened to close the book; and one day, when I ventured to guess at a hard word, she took it away altogether, saying it was useless for any one to take the trouble to teach me. That made me so unhappy that I cried, for I had set my heart on giving you this surprise; and at last grandmother forgave me. We began again, and on that day I took five lessons, because I had had only three when I behaved so foolishly. Now you *are* pleased with me, are you not, dear mamma?"

"Yes, my darling, I am greatly pleased that you have learned to read; but more pleased than words can tell that you have learned to be willing to give yourself some trouble to gain a good end. *That* lesson is worth all the others."

"Well, mamma, to tell the truth, I *could* not be idle with grandmother for a teacher. I had no choice but to give myself trouble, as you say. But is it not an excellent thing, mamma, that I shall now be able not only to read myself, but to teach Jean also?"

Marie was right; with Madame Derville one *must* do as she desired. To her the ordinary weaknesses of maternal affection were almost incomprehensible. The captain often said that his mother had shown no indulgence to any of her children except to his sister Caroline, a frail, delicate child, who died at the age of twelve years, in a decline. The sons of the family were brought up under a strict discipline, but with an impartial justice, that forbade their doubting for a moment the entire devotion of their mother. Not one of them

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would ever have dreamed of disobeying her slightest command or wish.

Madame André was a little afraid of her mother-in-law, and was as submissive to her as her own children. Marie was of course subject to the same authority; but with her unquestioning obedience was mingled a profound confidence in the affection and goodness of her grandmother, which secretly touched the old lady's heart. "I shall never love another child as I love Marie," said she to her husband, who had failed very rapidly during the past few weeks. He was almost totally deaf, and his wife's voice was the only one that could convey any meaning to him.

He nodded his head approvingly as she spoke of Marie, and muttered to himself, "So much the better! so much the better! The child will comfort her when I am gone."

One morning, while Marie still slept, the loud ringing of a bell resounded through the house. Madame André, who was only half dressed, ran to the stair-head in alarm, for it was not the custom at La Mivoie to ring bells; the ladies of the family called to Séraphine, or waited on themselves. Another peal followed quickly upon the first; and Madame André, finding that the noise came from the bell in Madame Derville's chamber, hastened thither. Monsieur Derville's head rested on the shoulder of his wife; and although he breathed faintly, and his eyes were still open, he was unable to speak. The doctor was summoned immediately; but before he could arrive, all was over. The imprisoned spirit, released from its long, weary bondage, and exhausted by the sufferings of so many years, gladly

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took flight to its heavenly home. Madame Derville gently moved the head of her beloved one from her shoulder to the pillow, kissed the pale brow, and, murmuring, "I shall be with thee soon!" fell upon her knees; her daughter-in-law wept and prayed by her side.

As they arose, Marie, who had been roused by the unusual bustle in the house, glided into the room, in her night-dress, with her curls streaming over her shoulders. She cast but one terrified glance towards the bed on which her grandfather lay, and then clung to Madame Derville, seeming to feel instinctively that a double portion of love must now be given to her. The grandmother clasped her in her arms, saying, "You will never leave me, my Marie?" And, looking pleadingly at Madame André: "I shall not be here very long, I hope; but while my life lasts, let me have this child!"

Madame André threw her arms tenderly around the grandmother and the little one, not knowing at the moment how to reply to this touching appeal, ignorant as she was of her husband's probable wishes regarding Marie.

Madame Derville, however, exacted no immediate reply; she had relieved her heart by the expression of her earnest desire, and was content to say no more. She put Marie down. "Go and dress yourself, my child," she said; then, turning towards the bed, she seated herself in her husband's arm-chair, and gazed fixedly on the face of the departed. Her hands were clasped, and the movement of her lips showed that she was praying; and Madame André softly led the weeping Marie from the room. The widow was alone with God.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE DECISION.

THE days rolled on, quietly and uneventfully. The funeral was over, and Marie well knew where to find her grandmother, when she had vainly searched in every corner of the house and garden. She would then take Séraphine by the hand, saying, "Come with me to grandpapa's home." And the child was seldom mistaken. Almost invariably they found the old lady seated beside her husband's grave. Marie said nothing at these times. She only crept quietly to her grandmother's side, and, drawing her wrinkled hand down upon her shoulder, remained motionless until the old lady was ready to return home.

One day, after thus seeking and accompanying Madame Derville on her homeward walk, Marie ran to her mother's room, where, as usual, Madame André was occupied in the care of little Jean. Marie kissed the baby, danced a few steps to amuse him, and then, seating herself on a cushion at her mother's feet, fell into a deep reverie.

"What are you thinking about, my daughter?" said Madame André, astonished at her prolonged silence.

"I cannot understand!" replied Marie, and fell to thinking again.

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"What is it that you cannot understand?"

"What my grandmother said to me as we walked from the cemetery to-day."

"And what did she say?"

"She said, 'I must go to the grave while I can; very soon I shall be able to visit it no more.' What is going to happen to grandmother?" And Marie raised her tearful eyes to her mother. "Will she be lame, mamma, and unable to walk, like poor grandpapa?" At this thought Marie wept aloud; and Madame André, while caressing and comforting her child, became, in her turn, very thoughtful. Several times of late she had seen the old notary of the village, a life-long and trusted friend of all the Dervilles, at La Mivoie. And only a few days before she had imposed silence upon Séraphine, who had tried to converse with her about Monsieur Derville's affairs.

"There will be great changes, now that my old master is dead," said Séraphine; "and it is a thousand pities that the captain is away." But these vague hints had made no impression on Madame André, nor had she for a moment been disquieted as to the effect of Monsieur Derville's death upon the comfort and welfare of his widow.

Previous to the captain's departure, he had explained to his wife the limited extent of his own resources, but had added, "If you find yourself in any difficulty during my absence, apply at once to my mother. She will give you not only good advice, but substantial assistance." Madame André fancied that these words were spoken rather hesitatingly, and she resolved at that moment to live so economically that it would be un-

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necessary to ask any one for help. "André told me to go to his mother," she thought, "in order to make my mind easy; but, from the tone in which he spoke, I am sure that he would be sorry if I should be forced to do so." And she had lived strictly within her narrow allowance, without once encroaching on the little reserve fund that was carefully laid aside in her secretary.

She now asked herself, "Is it possible that my mother can be in any serious pecuniary difficulties?" But she was timid and retiring, and dared not break the ice, nor be the first to approach a subject about which no one had yet spoken to her. Marie, however, had no such scruples; and, finding that her mother could not or would not enlighten her as to the meaning of her grandmother's mysterious words, she ran away, and resolved to go directly to Madame Derville for an explanation.

She soon found the old lady, who had walked with Monsieur Masson, the notary, to the garden gate, and now turned towards the house. "Please tell me, grandmother," inquired Marie, "why Monsieur Masson has come here so often lately." And without waiting for an answer, her first idea recurred to her; and, taking Madame Derville's hands lovingly within her own, she added, "And why did you say that you should soon be unable to go to grandpapa's grave? Shall you also be lame and weak, as he was?"

For once Marie's questioning was unsuccessful. Her grandmother made no other reply than, "Run, my child, and beg your mamma to come to my room for a little while."

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"Yes, grandmother; and I can take care of Jean while mamma is with you."

"If he is asleep, it will be better for your mother to bring him with her; she will not be easy at leaving no one but yourself with him should he wake."

Marie went up-stairs to summon her mother, not a little piqued at her grandmother's suggestion. "I can amuse and take care of Jean as well as any one in the house," she said to herself.

The baby was sound asleep, and, to her great joy, Marie was allowed to sit beside the cradle and watch over his slumbers, promising to call her mother immediately if he should wake.

"But he will not wake," said Marie; "if he stirs, I shall rock him ever so gently, and he will sleep like a little dormouse." Indeed, she commenced the rocking process the moment her mother closed the door.

"Well, my daughter," said Madame Derville, as Madame André entered her room slowly and with a scared, agitated look upon her face, "at last I am able to understand our affairs clearly, and the time has come to tell you how things stand with us. Sit here, before me. Ah, if André were only by your side! His father was sleeping when he went away, and could not even bid him adieu!" Madame André's eyes filled with tears, but the old lady said, quickly, "Now I need your advice." And at these words a vague fear crept over the younger woman, and recalled her thoughts from that sad day of parting to the emergencies of the present moment.

Madame Derville was not in the habit of asking or following the advice of any one, and no member of her

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family ever dreamed of offering it. Madame André was therefore astounded to find herself thus taken into her counsel, and to hear her say, "You may not know that the chief part of our income was derived from my husband's military pension. That, of course, expired with him; and there is very little left. Fifteen years ago I was in urgent need of a sum of money, too large to be spared from our income, or from the little reserve fund which I had stored away, as you stored yours, in my secretary. We owned nothing of value except this house, and I was obliged to raise the money required by mortgaging La Mivoie. Until now I have always been able to pay the interest punctually, but I can pay it no longer. My little purse in the cupboard is empty, and the small sum invested in the funds has gradually melted away during the years of my poor husband's long illness. I could not bear to deny him a single comfort or luxury, or to let him suspect that our means were so sadly small. I knew that enough remained to carry us along while his life lasted, and I dared look no further. Now I have paid for his grave and for his funeral, and, Jeanne, I have *nothing* left!"

The brave old lady's courage gave way at last. She was sixty years old, and saw before her only a dreary, desolate, impoverished life, which yet might endure for another score of years. Her daughter-in-law sat like one in a dream, and could not utter even a word of consolation. The old lady also relapsed into silence, while she recalled the years that were gone, and thought of that eventful day on which her son—the only one left—André, then a lieutenant, came to her in a state of wild despair, to confess that he was overwhelmed with

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debt; he had gambled, had lost heavily, and was utterly unable to clear himself. "Help me, my mother," he cried, "if you would not see me put an end to my miserable life!"

Madame Derville's horror of debt was unspeakable; but even more keen was her contempt for the weakness and folly her son had displayed in thus succumbing to temptation. Before uttering, however, one word of reproof, or allowing him to guess at the depth of her mortification and distress, she took measures to pay all his debts and separate him from his evil companions. He went to sea immediately, and profited so well by this terrible experience that he never sinned again. But La Mivoie was burdened by a heavy mortgage; and now, in order to live during the absence of the son for whom she had sacrificed everything, the dearly-loved home must be sold, and, at sixty years of age, this devoted mother must work for her daily bread! She had known that this was before her, yet, sustained by strength from above, she had concealed her fears, and spoken cheerfully to her dying husband when he was inclined to dwell despondingly upon her situation after he should have left her.

At last she spoke again. "Now I have no choice but to sell La Mivoie, discharge the mortgage, and decide what we had best do with the small sum that will remain after all is settled. I do not desire to remain in this part of the country. What is your advice, Jeanne?"

Madame André started; she had scarcely heard the last words of her mother-in-law, so absorbed was she in trying to divine what could have been the pressing necessity which had led Madame Derville—so prudent,

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so cautious, and so sagacious in the management of her affairs—to lay this heavy burden upon the little property that her own husband, André, would inherit. She asked herself whether it were possible that some old embarrassment of Monsieur Derville's could have necessitated this sacrifice; but the idea of her own husband being implicated in any way did not enter her mind. She replied almost at random to Madame Derville's question by another: "And how can you leave this place, and change the whole course of your life? Where could you go?"

The old lady drew herself up to her full height with an air of pride; then, bowing her head as if in self-reproach, she answered, "One can always do what God wills. But, my daughter, I know all the resources of this little town, and it is impossible for me to make a living here."

Madame André was more bewildered and astonished every moment. At first she had not realized that her mother-in-law was so utterly reduced. "We must live together," she now cried; forgetting, as she saw the path of duty plain before her, all her hesitation about her husband's probable wishes. She tenderly embraced Madame Derville, who returned her caresses, saying,—

"I sincerely hope, dear Jeanne, that we may never be separated; but how are we to live, if we do not work?"

"True!" replied Madame André, letting her hands fall upon her lap with a gesture of despair. "But where can I find work? I can do nothing but embroider, and that is poorly paid. And, besides, I must give some time and care to my children."

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"Listen to me, Jeanne; I have thought it all out. When we have in our purse the five or six thousand francs which will remain after the sale of La Mivoie, and have paid all that we owe here, we will bid adieu to this country, and go away to my old home in Brucourt, near the sea. I have friends and relations there, who sometimes write to me, and who will give us a hearty welcome. The scenery is beautiful, and, above all, we can live far more cheaply there than here. Then we will open a school for little girls,—a boarding- as well as day-school. We will take with us the old piano, on which my little Caroline used to play, and you shall teach music and English; yes, and Latin, if they desire it" (and the old lady smiled mischievously at Madame André, who had always studiously kept her classical knowledge out of sight); "and I will teach the little ones to read, attend to the housekeeping, and keep everything in order. By this means we shall be able to live comfortably, at least until André shall return. Afterwards, we shall see." She ceased speaking, and looked at her daughter, who had listened with an anxious, troubled face, but who stammered out,—

"Let all be as you say, my mother; only I fear that I cannot help you as I ought. I am so timid, so awkward! You know I could not even teach Marie to read; and now, to undertake the education of strange children——"

"You could have taught Marie well enough, if she had not been such a little blockhead; and you have already taught her plenty of other things. And, my child," added the old lady, in a tone which showed how truly she had experienced the value of the succor

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she offered to another, "the good God will be always ready to help us. There is only one little spot of earth out yonder that I shall regret; but I shall carry its memory with me."

Not one word of the grand sacrifice she had made long ago for her son! Not a repining word as she looked back over the thirty years passed so happily in the beloved home that was soon to be hers no longer! The strong mother heart bravely took up the heavy burden, and prepared to walk steadily and trustingly along the thorny road that led into the future.

Madame André was inspired by the courage of her mother, and cast aside her timidity and hesitation. She rose, and, throwing her arms affectionately round the older and sterner woman, pledged herself, as did Ruth of old to Naomi: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; and where thou diest, will I die."

"If she knew," thought Madame Derville,—"if she knew that her husband's fault has brought this trouble upon us! But no matter. André will himself tell her, some day or other."

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CHAPTER VIII.

ADIEU!

THE sacrifice was accomplished, and all visible links with the past were forever broken. La Mivoie was already the property of strangers. Séraphine, who had just made up her mind to marry an honest grocer in the village, promised to care for her old master's grave. He was the only one of the family who rested there; for, as Madame Derville said, "My dead are scattered everywhere!" Her little children, her daughter Caroline, and her sons who had grown to manhood, were buried each in a different part of France. "But my father and my mother both lie in the old cemetery of Brucourt, whither we are going; and when I die, my Jeanne, you will bury me beside them."

In these sad days, so full of weariness, her thoughts went back with joy, and a feeling of protection and repose, to her childish days, when father and mother sheltered her from all care and trouble, and when she was innocently ignorant of the possibility of a desolate, impoverished old age.

The news of the changes at La Mivoie excited profound astonishment in the village. Madame Derville had never talked of her affairs to her neighbors; but when Madame Robinet came to the house, pouring out

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loud and genuine lamentations over the departure of her friends, the brave old lady did not hesitate to say, "I have no means of living unless I work; and if I stay here, what can I find to do?" Madame Robinet sat silent and stupefied. "I intend," continued Madame Derville, "to open a small school at Brucourt; could I do that here?"

"I should be only too glad to send Louise and Césarine," cried Madame Robinet, warmly.

"Thanks; but where would the other scholars come from? The village school is a good one, and amply sufficient for the needs of the place. Nothing more is required or would be supported here."

"I see how it is," thought Madame Robinet; "the old lady is too proud to open a school here, where every one has looked up to and respected her so long; and I fancy she is right."

Madame Derville was quite sure that she was right. She had made several mistakes in her life, but her decisions were always made thoughtfully and with the conviction that she was acting for the best; and having once marked out a course of action, she followed it unswervingly. And if it really was, as Madame Robinet imagined, a secret feeling of pride which led her to begin her new life in another place rather than in the midst of the people who had known and esteemed her for so many years, no suspicion of such a motive dawned upon her own mind. "You will see," she repeated constantly to Madame André and Marie, "how beautiful my country is! And the sea is such excellent company! One never grows weary of it."

Marie had never seen the ocean, but she loved it

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already for her father's sake, who had often described its wonders to her, and always told her that he was never *quite* happy when away from the sight and sound of the waves. The novelty of the breaking-up at La Mivoie, and the long journey in prospect, were also anticipated by her with all a child's delight in excitement and bustle. The idea of having several other children added to the family in the new home was inexpressibly charming. "Perhaps there will be some *very* little ones, mamma, much smaller than I; then I shall take all the care of them. I can help them to dress in the morning, and to arrange their hair. I know quite well, mamma, how to part my own." And, throwing into dire disorder the mass of brown curls that shaded her sweet little face, she rushed away to find a comb and to display her talent for hair-dressing.

Marie had not made many intimate friends in the village; nor was she specially attached to her nearest playmates, the Robinets. Césarine was disposed to fret and grumble, Louise was stupid and uninteresting, and all were noisy and ill-bred. "To be sure," said Marie, "Denis always behaves well,—that is, as well as he can; but even he is very rough, and says, sometimes, very disagreeable things to Césarine."

Denis was greatly troubled when his sisters told him that the family at La Mivoie was going away, and refused to believe it, except from Marie herself. "It is nothing but one of your stories," he said to Louise; but Marie confirmed the intelligence.

"Yes, we are all going a long way off, to Normandy, where grandmother lived when she was a little girl. We shall have a very large house there, I think, and it will

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be filled with children. Grandmother and mamma will teach them their lessons, and I shall take care of the very little ones. You know I am seven years old now," she said, proudly, trying to draw herself up to appear very tall.

Denis began to understand the state of things. "And why does not Madame Derville fill La Mivoie with little children? I am sure there are enough of them; and it would do them no harm to be well brought up."

"I do not know," said Marie, feeling obliged to speak the truth, yet disliking to confess her ignorance. "Grandmother has only told me that we are going away; and all I know is that La Mivoie does not belong to us any more!"

Denis quickly shut up the knife with which he had been trimming a hazel-branch. "Then it is really true," said he; "and I must make up my mind to see you no more. But when I am a soldier, as I mean to be, perhaps my regiment will pass through Brucourt; then I shall find out Madame Derville's house, and you will be glad to see me, will you not, Marie, even if you are quite grown up?" And Marie promised, with all her heart, to welcome him.

The day of departure arrived. Several of the Robinet family came to see the travelers off; and Madame Robinet brought, as a parting gift, a hamper filled with provisions.

"You are most kind," said Madame André, "but Séraphine has already given us this great basket." She carried it in one hand, and baby Jean in the other.

But Madame Robinet would not be refused, and her hamper must go into the bottom of the old carriage.

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"Where is Denis?" asked Marie.

"We have looked for him everywhere," replied the others, "but cannot find him."

All was now ready, and the driver took his seat; but Denis did not appear to say adieu.

Madame Derville cast one long, fond look at La Mivoie; then her eyes sought out the cemetery, in which she could easily distinguish the one dear grave, now covered with the green grass and early flowers of spring. Her last glance was given as the carriage passed a turn in the road, where, between two little wooded hills, the belfry of the church peeped out; then, nothing more could be seen of the old home.

Marie sat perfectly still; her mother wept in silence; but Madame Derville did not shed a single tear. She stretched out her hand and drew Marie close to her side, and the child clung to her lovingly, quiet and sad, though she scarcely knew why. But the troubles of childhood never last long, and she soon began to chatter as usual. "What a lucky thing it is," she said, "that Crapaudine is so nicely hidden away under the stones! Now the people who are to live at La Mivoie cannot harm her, even if they wished to; and there *are* people who do not like toads."

Madame Derville turned towards the child and smiled; the thread of her bitter thoughts was broken. "You need not go far, Marie, to find one of those people: there is your mamma, who never could endure Crapaudine."

On hearing these words, Marie jumped into the front seat, at the risk of awakening Jean, and exclaimed, pathetically, "Is it really as grandmother says? Mamma,

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do you not like toads? not even poor Crapaudine?" Her mother made a negative gesture, and Marie went on: "Then, mamma, you are *very* good! better even than I always thought you were!" She paused to bestow a hearty kiss on Madame André. "Why, mamma, you never once told me you did not like them; you used to go with me to see Crapaudine, and one day when Phanor tried to scratch her, you drove him away; and you did it only because I loved Crapaudine! Oh, mamma, you are *too* good!"

The mother and grandmother were both greatly diverted by this outpouring of gratitude. "Poor Phanor!" said Marie, presently; "he must be very tired, shut up all alone in that basket. May I not give him a little fresh air?"

"No," replied her mother; "if you once let him out, we shall have trouble in putting him in again; besides, here we are at the station, where we shall take the cars."

Marie was overjoyed at the prospect of passing a whole night on the train, as they would be obliged to do; but her delight was increased fourfold when, on mounting the platform to enter the cars, she spied a familiar face, and shouted aloud, "Here is Denis!"

And Denis indeed it was, staff in hand, after the fashion of the peasants when equipped for a pedestrian journey. He appeared rather embarrassed, and was evidently relieved when Madame Derville beckoned him to approach.

"Pray help us, Denis, to carry some of our bundles," she said, cordially. And the good fellow, seizing, in his desire to be useful, on all the heaviest articles, upset

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Phanor's basket. The frightened creature sent forth most piteous cries, and Marie, picking up the basket, whispered to Denis,—

"Let me carry it; if they hear any noise they will not let us take it in the car, and it is Phanor, you know."

Denis, unaware that the basket contained a living animal, and bewildered for the moment by the loud mewing of the cat, allowed all the other things to fall from his hands. There was no time to lose; once more the divers bundles and packages were gathered together, and Madame Derville went into the office to buy the tickets.

"Third class, my mother," pleaded Madame André, wishing to save the old lady's francs.

"No; I shall take second-class tickets," replied she, decidedly. "Were I alone, it would be of no consequence; but I have you and Marie to care for."

Their seats were taken in a car, but the travelers looked with dismay at the baskets, bags, and parcels which Denis heaped up around them. By giving a fee of ten sous to an employé of the station, he had succeeded in following his friends into the car, and now assisted, to the best of his ability, in making them comfortable.

An old gentleman who sulkily watched the little procession of new-comers, started to his feet when Madame André entered with Jean in her arms.

"What!" said he, in an undertone of vexation that was quite audible to our travelers, "a nursing baby! That is too much! I will not submit to it." And, seizing his bag, he disappeared in hot haste.

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Marie was, for a moment, indignant on Jean's behalf, but soon forgot her wrath in her amusement, as she saw the old gentleman enter and leave one car after another in search of a seat. "He has given us more room," she said, gaily; "and do see, mamma! he has walked the whole length of the train without finding a place. There must be children everywhere! There! he has gone into a car and shut the door. I am so glad, for I was afraid he might come back here. Now we are off! Good-by, Denis!" And she kissed her hand, and smiled an adieu to Denis, who stood outside upon the platform. He returned her adieu with a very serious face. "Poor Denis! he is a good boy. I did not think he cared enough for us to come so far to see us off." And she turned away to begin a game of romps with Jean.

Denis watched the train so long as it remained in sight, and as the last faint trail of smoke vanished, he muttered to himself, "Well, that is all over!" and took up his homeward march.

His sisters complained for several days that Denis was "shockingly cross;" but their mother only said, "Let him alone." Busy and preoccupied as she was, she understood that the departure of the family from La Mivoie had brought heartfelt sorrow to her son.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNEY.

THE old gentleman whose flight from the car had so much amused Marie was not the only one who looked askance at the party of women and children; but Jean was so quiet, and Marie conducted herself so well, that the fears of the other travelers were dispelled. Marie took up her station at the doorway, promising not to lean out, and talked in an undertone of all she saw. So far, she gave no trouble; but the same could not be said of the innumerable parcels and bundles, which greatly encroached upon the ordinary limits and threatened constantly to fall upon the heads of their embarrassed owners. Already Madame Derville had been startled at receiving the lunch-basket upon her knees.

"What a blessing," exclaimed Marie, "that it did not fall on Jean's head!"

"Nor on the head of one of these people!" thought her mother.

Madame Derville quietly cut the string that held the lid of the basket, and gave Marie an apricot and a piece of bread for her lunch. Marie disclaimed all idea of hunger,—she was too entirely absorbed by the novelty of the scenes through which she was passing to think about eating. She tried to distinguish the various crops,—the wheat, oats, and flax, all of which

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were still standing,—and was intensely interested when they flew past a great tract of field-cabbage, with the cutters busily at work. She overwhelmed the patient Madame Derville with questions and comments, and enjoyed each moment more than the last.

Jean slept soundly. By common consent, the seat next him was left empty. Marie was furnished with a time-table, and made quite a little parade of her reading abilities by announcing the name of each station in turn. "The people can hear me much better, can they not, grandmother, than that man away off yonder, who calls the names over so quickly?" And she was so earnest in her wish to benefit her fellow-travelers that they could not help smiling good-naturedly at her.

After a time a respectable-looking, middle-aged man, who sat near the child, took from his pocket a box of bonbons, and offered her a burnt almond. "In return, mam'selle," said he, "for your kindness in giving us the names of the stations."

Marie blushed, and would have declined the bonbon, but her grandmother signed to her to accept it. She did so, and thanked the giver courteously, but was so abashed at finding that she had drawn public attention upon herself that she became silent, and contented herself with looking from the window without further remarks.

The day wore on, and at noon the train stopped at a station where most of the passengers alighted to dine. Madame Derville, who, with her party, remained in the car, now opened Madame Robinet's hamper, and produced, to Marie's delight, a substantial repast, consisting of a cold chicken nicely carved, delicious biscuits,

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some fine ripe pears, and a bottle of home-made wine. They all made an excellent dinner; and Marie, without saying a word, put aside a good bit of chicken for Phanor. "When it grows dark," said she to herself, "and no one can see, I shall lift him softly from the basket, hide him under my mantle, and give him his supper. He is so scared, I am sure he will be very quiet."

Poor Marie had already made several ineffectual attempts to cheer and comfort Phanor in his confinement, but her grandmother discovered and discouraged her charitable intentions on each occasion. "The cat is doing very well; let him alone, my dear," she said; and Marie obeyed.

During the absence of the other passengers, and while she was absorbed in her own dinner, she had forgotten Phanor; and now, just as she was wondering whether it would not be safe to release him for a moment, the warning bell sounded, and the passengers resumed their seats; the opportunity was lost. "I must wait a little longer," thought Marie.

At last night came on. The lamps were lighted, and under one of them stood Marie, trying to read, not her time-table any longer, but the two verses from the Testament which she was accustomed to commit to memory every evening before retiring. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Marie repeated the sacred words hesitatingly, pausing to recall them correctly; but the trusting heart

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of the grandmother, and the timid, desponding spirit of the mother, as she sat, pale and weary, her baby on her knee, both received comfort from the divine promise recited so simply by the little girl. These two poor women, embarking on a precarious and uncertain career, without friends and far removed from their one earthly support, still placed implicit confidence in the heavenly promise. "'To-morrow will take care of the things of itself,'" repeated Marie; "that must mean, grandmother, that *God* will take care of us, does it not? for of course *to-morrow* is not a person." Madame Derville was too much overcome to answer, except by a tender embrace; but Marie went on talking to herself. "Well, to-day is nearly over, and to-morrow we shall be in Brucourt. It is very droll to know nothing at all about the place where one is going to live. But no matter; I shall see papa's beloved ocean. Mamma," she exclaimed aloud, "it seems to me that we shall be much nearer to papa when we live beside the sea. Do not you think so?"

But mamma gave the little chatterbox to understand, by an emphatic gesture, that she must talk no more. Already one old lady had carefully removed her bonnet, replacing it by an immense night-cap, which was securely fastened by a wonderful flowered-silk pocket-handkerchief. The men produced soft traveling-caps from their pockets, and Marie's "friend of the burnt almonds," as she had called him to herself, drew over his eyes an embroidered smoking-cap. Madame Derville laid aside Marie's little hat and tucked up her curls into a white cotton net; while Madame André folded Jean's frock neatly and wrapped him in a warm

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shawl. Then the two ladies pulled the hoods of their cloaks over their heads, added a mantle to Marie's little *paletot*, and the whole party addressed itself to sleep.

That is to say, the whole party except Marie. She had set her heart upon releasing and refreshing poor Phanor, and found it impossible to compose herself for the night until this should be accomplished. "He will not eat in this strange place," her grandmother had assured her; but Marie could not believe that in any place, or under any circumstances, Phanor would refuse a nice bit of chicken. She waited only for a convenient opportunity to make the experiment.

Madame Derville, worn out by fatigue, excitement, and the strong effort she had made all day to be cheerful, was now in a drowsy, half-waking, half-unconscious state. Madame André was leaning over Jean; but Marie, who had ensconced herself on the floor of the car, made sure that her mother slept also. Now was the time! Very cautiously, she drew still nearer to Phanor's basket, which had been deposited beneath the seat; her deft little fingers patiently untied the cord that held the cover securely in its place, and in a moment it was in her hand. Phanor, awakened from a sound sleep, raised his fine head negligently and surveyed the unaccustomed scene. The sight of his little mistress calmed his somewhat excited nerves; he began to purr gently; but presently, gathering himself together for a spring, he prepared to alight in her lap. Marie saw his intention, however, and, realizing that the upsetting of the basket would inevitably produce a commotion, seized him in her arms, held him with one hand under the great shawl which had been thrown

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around her, and with the other slid the cover of the basket back into its place. All was done in the twinkling of an eye, and no one was the wiser. Marie resumed her seat; her grandmother slept profoundly; and the child triumphed in her own superior knowledge, as she saw that Phanor was *not* too much scared to eat. Hunger drove away fear; and he munched away at his bit of chicken with that delightful air of nonchalance peculiar to cats of good family. But woe to any one who should have ventured to interfere with his supper!

Suddenly, at the other end of the car, a little head peered out from under a railway rug; cautiously at first, as if on guard; then a cry, three leaps, and in an instant every inmate of the car started up in affright, but without knowing what had caused the alarm. Phanor bounded from Marie's arms and rushed towards a little greyhound, which, standing on the back of a seat, barked loudly and furiously at its enemy. The noise awoke Jean, who added his cries to the general tumult, and all was confusion. From each compartment a surprised or enraged countenance looked forth. Marie mounted a heap of cushions, and called to Phanor at the top of her voice, but dared not approach, on account of the fierce little dog. In the midst of the tumult, a traveler pulled the alarm-bell, and the conductor hurried into the car, inquiring on every side the cause of the commotion.

"Behind that curtain!" shouted a dozen voices, and a dozen hands pointed out the scene of action. "A man has been killed in there!"

"No; a woman is frightfully ill! Have you not heard the groans?"

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The conductor quickly raised the curtain, and a peal of laughter followed, as the passengers beheld "the situation."

Madame Derville, who had awakened with a start, like all the rest, comprehended, in the next moment, what had happened. Marie had disobeyed, and released Phanor, and some one else had sinned likewise, performing the same office for a dog; the two natural enemies, discovering each other by the instinct of hate, had rushed into mortal combat.

Marie almost fainted from terror and shame, as her grandmother, laying her hand sternly upon her shoulder, said, "Sit down and be quiet, child; you have made enough trouble already." Then, without hesitation, the brave old lady seized Phanor, who was fighting tooth and nail, dragged him from his foe, shut him into the basket, and, turning towards the dog's mistress, remarked, politely, "If you will do the same, madame, we may hope for some quiet sleep."

Madame André had not attempted to assist her mother-in-law, who was, indeed, quite equal to the emergency; but devoted her attention to quieting Jean, who cried as if his little heart would break.

The conductor was enraged, and did not conceal his wrath. The passengers had been alarmed, the engineer had been obliged to put down the brakes and slacken his speed, for nothing; and the indignant official even muttered threats of fines, imprisonment, etc. The dog was relentlessly carried off, and deposited in the box intended for such passengers, despite the pleading and lamentations of his mistress, who would have accompanied him into exile but for the brief decree,

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"There is no room for ladies where he is going." Phanor's basket was fastened with an additional cord; and as the conductor finally marched away, he said, severely, "When we reach the next station, I shall bring in a table of the railway regulations: perhaps they will hinder mam'selle from meddling with what does not concern her!" His annoyance had caused him, for once, to forget his accustomed courtesy, and one could almost excuse him for the omission, under the circumstances. His anger was, however, so disproportionate to the offense, in Marie's opinion, that it almost effaced her remorse. She drew herself up with an air of injured innocence at his closing rebuke, but, meeting her grandmother's eye, quickly bent her head again.

Silence was now re-established; but the harmony and good humor of the travelers did not return so easily. The dog's mistress could not be reconciled to the separation from her pet, and recounted her wrongs at great length; that Phanor was left and her little companion taken, added insult to injury, and so excited did she become on the subject that Marie's "friend," willing to stand by her in her disgrace, ventured to remark, "But the railway, madame, provides special transportation for dogs, and none for cats."

"I am not a child, sir!" sharply replied the irate lady.

"All the more reason, then, madame, why you should not behave like one."

At break of day, and without further words, the lady left the car. "To rejoin her beloved dog," said the other travelers.

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By this time Marie's heart was filled with compassion for the poor little creature. "If it should take a bad cold in that dismal, cold box, I shall be to blame," she thought. And the tears, which had not flowed during all her preceding troubles, rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, why did I not at least beg the lady's pardon before she went away?" But her repentance came too late.

Madame Derville had spoken but few words, as yet, to Marie on the subject of her disobedience and of its results. Madame André, whose rebukes were ordinarily much more prolonged and severe than those of Madame Derville, had fallen asleep again, opening her eyes occasionally to look at Jean, who was quiet at last. The good grandmother said not a word about the scratches and bites she had received while separating Phanor from his foe, but with the first rays of the morning light Marie's keen eyes perceived the sorry condition of her hands. A handkerchief, stained with blood, was wrapped round them, and Marie burst into tears as she pictured to herself the hidden wounds.

"Oh, grandmother! dear grandmother!" she cried, "it is all my fault! I disobeyed you, and your poor hands are suffering because I was so wicked and so foolish." And the child sobbed aloud in genuine distress.

Madame Derville smiled. "Well," said she, "it is true that all these scratches ought to have been yours; but you were too wise to take hold of poor Phanor. He was so frightened and so angry that he did not know what he was doing, and if you had gone near him he might have flown at you and put out your eyes."

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"And how, then, grandmother, dared you touch him?"

"Oh, my old eyes are not to be scratched out so easily."

Marie's tears flowed afresh when, on arriving at the station where they were to leave the train, her grandmother found it impossible to draw on her gloves, so swollen and inflamed were her hands. "Every one will ask immediately, What is the matter?" said Marie, overwhelmed with sorrow and shame.

Madame Derville tried to comfort her, and bade her dry her eyes. "A pretty-looking child we shall have," said the old lady, "to present to our cousins!"

Marie hid herself in the corner of the carriage sent to meet the travelers, and did not raise her head until from the lips of her mother and her grandmother there broke the simultaneous cry, "The sea! the sea!"

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CHAPTER X.

BRUCOURT.

YES, there was the sea, in all its calm, wonderful majesty; rolling, rolling ever towards eternity, bounded only by the gray horizon! The sea,—always the same, yet ever changing; full of life, but impressing the beholder with a sense of awful loneliness.

The first thought which occurred to Marie as she gazed on this great ocean of which she had heard and talked so much, and which she now saw for the first time, was, "How immensely large it is!" and her first words, murmured low in her grandmother's ear, were, "How little papa's ship must look, all alone, out yonder upon the sea!"

Madame Derville shuddered, but this time it was her daughter-in-law who sought to dispel her fears, and offered for consolation the precious words, "It is I; be not afraid."

The old lady looked at her affectionately. "You are right, Jeanne; the Lord who walked upon the waves will take care of our André,—in his hands we may safely leave our beloved one!"

Madame André was timid and reserved, and rarely spoke of her religious sentiments; but the troubles of the last few months had made her more demonstrative, at least towards her mother-in-law. The separation

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from her husband, and her constant anxiety on his account, had first drawn her out of herself; then Jean's birth, and Madame Derville's devoted care and affection, followed by the common sorrow of Monsieur Derville's death, had united the two desolate hearts more closely than ever before; while Madame André came to find comfort in religion as did the elder woman. "Without God, I should have died in those weary days," she said, in after-years.

Marie looked earnestly upon the ocean; her first impulse of fear passed away before the calm faces and trusting words of her mother and grandmother; still, she could not help repeating to herself the words of an old fisherman's song which her father had often sung to her. "My boat is so small, and the sea is so wide," was the refrain; and the supplication it seemed to utter sank into the child's heart as she realized, for the first time, the helplessness of the sailor afloat on that great expanse of ocean.

Madame Derville's eyes rested no longer on the sea, but on the changed aspect of the once familiar scenes through which the road now conducted the travelers. They left the neighborhood of the railway,—which had been built long since her childish days,—and drove slowly along a road also new to her; though the great masses of gray stone which were piled on both sides, and from which were built the gloomy-looking houses that stood far apart from each other, reminded her of the olden time. And she remembered also the long wastes, enlivened here and there by groups of ancient pear-trees and apple-trees; the narrow paths that crossed the highway, to afford passage to the cattle and to the cow-

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herds who led them out to seek for pasture; all these remained the same, and the old lady felt like a child again as she came back to the scenes of her childhood. Again she saw her father's house, and the corner of the old garden, where, in her girlish days, the brave young soldier who afterwards became her husband sat for the first time by her side. She seemed to see, too, her parents: her father, the sturdy old farmer, so proud of the one only daughter among his six tall sons; and her beloved mother, bowed beneath the weight of care and labor rather than of years, ever gentle, ever loving and faithful. All these memories crowded upon Madame Derville during the quiet drive along the country road, and her eyes glistened and ran over with tears, which were still not tears of sorrow.

Marie sat watching her grandmother, but said nothing for a long time, seeming to comprehend, child though she was, the emotions which filled the hearts of her companions. But she found the silence very tiresome, and could not help saying to herself, constantly, "I hope we are not very far now from Brucourt."

At length, to her great delight, the carriage stopped before the door of a house, built, like almost all the cottages they had passed, of the dark-gray stone of the country; its otherwise gloomy aspect was relieved by a mass of climbing plants, ivy and trumpet-creepers, which covered the front with leaves and flowers. Two benches stood before the door, and a narrow garden-plot separated the house from the road.

"This is the place," said the driver.

Yes, Madame Derville knew it well; and she had

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bravely striven to prepare herself for the arrival at her old home. She knew before leaving La Mivoie that no one of her own immediate family lived now at Brucourt: her six brothers were either dead or scattered over the world; and a distant cousin, Michel Brémont, now owned and occupied her father's house.

Everything wore the same outward appearance as of old, but in that moment she realized, as never before, how utterly everything was changed. She felt that never again could she see one of the old faces, or hear one of the old voices; and, burying her face in her hands, she tried no longer to restrain her tears.

Marie was terrified at witnessing her grandmother's agitation, and endeavored by kisses and words of love to comfort her. Madame André saw that she must act for her mother-in-law. In the doorway stood Cousin Michel, attired in a long coat, his long gray hair floating over his shoulders; an awkward, honest, good-natured-looking man. By his side was a bright, active little woman, with piercing eyes, and a sharp, resolute voice. She stepped forward quickly to assist the travelers in alighting from the carriage, and would have taken Jean from Madame André's arms; but, alarmed at the sight of strange faces, he turned away, and clung tightly round his mother's neck.

"Thanks; I can get down easily if you will kindly bring a chair," said Madame André, smiling; and then added, in a low voice, as "Cousin Eulalie" would have greeted Madame Derville, "My mother is feeling very sorrowful at coming back to her old home; but if you will kindly leave her to herself for a few moments, she will soon be composed."

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"Cousin Eulalie," as she instantly desired to be called by the whole party, understood perfectly the old lady's emotion, and without another word showed Madame André, still carrying Jean, into the house.

Cousin Michel, who was a *savant*, and whose mind was constantly occupied with one idea, viz., a history of the Cotentin, which he was writing, still stood before the carriage, in which Madame Derville remained motionless, with Marie at her feet. The old gardener, who had acted as driver, calmly began to unharness the horse; Cousin Eulalie having said, as she led Madame André into the house, "She will not notice the man, and my husband will not speak to her."

But she was mistaken; for, as soon as the gardener disappeared with the horse, Michel approached the carriage and took Madame Derville's hand, saying, "Remember that those whom you loved and whom you will no longer find here have still left some traces behind, and the old home remains to welcome you." As he spoke, he put Marie gently to one side, to make room for her grandmother; and Madame Derville, casting away by a great effort the weight of sad memories which had so entirely overcome her, exclaimed, as if continuing a conversation begun some time before,—

"Yes, you are right; and it will not be long before you and I shall see those beloved ones again."

Cousin Michel bowed his head in assent, and without further speech offered the chair which had served for a step to Madame André. Marie jumped out first, and would have run into the house, but turned back to wait for her grandmother, who descended slowly and as if in a dream. She crossed the threshold, and, without

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waiting to be shown the way, laid her hand on the door of the dining-room.

"She will find nothing changed," said Cousin Eulalie, who followed, to Marie. "Everything is as she left it, even to the paper on the walls; for when it grew shabby and we were forced to replace it, my good old granny bought another exactly like it. She knew how I love the things I have looked at all my life."

The sight of the familiar rooms, which she seemed now never to have quitted, calmed and cheered Madame Derville, and she now looked and spoke naturally. She lifted Jean from his mother's arms, and said to the mistress of the house, "Since you are so good, Eulalie, as to take us in for a few days, pray allow Jeanne and the children to go to bed, for they are quite worn out."

Madame André made a feeble protest, but could not deny her fatigue. She had traveled for more than thirty hours, with Jean in her arms, and she gladly followed Eulalie into a large bedroom, furnished comfortably, but in very old-fashioned style, with curtains of ancient yellow cretonne, and a tiny strip of carpet at the bedside. It was very primitive and plain; but the air that came in at the open window was pure and bracing; the last rays of the setting sun illuminated the dark, bare floor; and the bed, already uncovered, sent forth from its snowy sheets and pillows a delicious perfume of lavender and rose-leaves. Half an hour later, Jean and his mother were sleeping soundly.

Marie had objected to retiring so early. "I am never obliged to go to bed while the sun is shining," said she; then, blushing, and looking towards Madame

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Derville, she added, "except when I have been naughty; and I have not been naughty to-day, grandmother, have I? not bad enough to be sent to bed early." And she looked with remorse at Madame Derville's swollen hands.

"No, you have not been very naughty; and you will not be, my child, for you will go to bed at once," replied her grandmother, in a decided tone, but with a smiling face. And she arose to accompany Marie, whose bed had been prepared in her chamber.

Cousin Michel inquired how she herself felt after the long, tiresome journey. "Are not *you* very tired?" he asked.

She answered, gaily, "I? Oh, no! How can you expect me to be tired, now that I am here? I feel like a girl of fifteen!" But her voice failed, and she leaned heavily upon the table beside her.

Marie ran to bring her a chair, exclaiming, "Grandmother is ill!"

Madame Derville recovered herself in a few moments, and no longer resisted the entreaties of Cousin Eulalie and Marie's pleading. "Come, grandmother, let us both go to bed; be a dear, good grandmother, and come with me; indeed, you *must* rest."

Madame Brémont brought some delicate bouillon, of which she persuaded the old lady to partake, and soon she lay down peacefully to rest. "This is the very room," she said to Marie, "where I slept in my childhood; and here are the pictures of my father and mother,"—showing two black profiles, the only portraits which were in those days within the reach of limited purses.

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"And were these good likenesses?" asked Marie.

"I used to think them so in the old days," replied Madame Derville; but in truth she found now but faint traces of the cherished features.

"I hope they did *not* look like these pictures," Marie said, in a low voice; "for if so, my great-grandfather and great-grandmother must have been two very ugly people."

"Well, Eulalie, so we are to eat our supper all alone," said Monsieur Brémont, as his wife, returning from her duties to her guests, entered the sitting-room, which served also as study for the master of the house.

"Yes; but I have roasted the fowl all the same," replied Cousin Eulalie; "and if either of them awakes later in the evening, it will be all ready. I am sure Marie will be glad of a bite."

"That child is the exact image of her grandmother at the same age. Poor Ernestine! How beautiful she was when she was twenty!" said Monsieur Brémont.

This name, "Ernestine," by which she had not been called for so many years, save by her husband, who was gone, was one of the tender memories that overpowered poor Madame Derville as she returned to her old home in Brucourt.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD GRANGE.

"I AM anxious, dear Eulalie, to be settled," said Madame Derville, the next morning, as she appeared, fresh and smiling, and seeming quite recovered from the fatigue of her journey.

Madame André was still pale and languid; and Marie could not be aroused from her sound slumber; but Madame Derville, brighter and stronger, as she said, "than the young people," went to join Cousin Eulalie in the garden. After a short walk, they seated themselves on the bench in front of the house, shelling the peas just gathered, and chatting pleasantly together.

"Tell me what you were able to do for me in the way of a house. I know you succeeded in finding one; and I shall wish to go and see it, after breakfast."

Madame Brémont reddened a little, as she replied, "I had no trouble in finding a house. About two years ago Michel bought the old Grange; but no one has ever lived in it. When your letter came, he said, at once, 'It will suit Ernestine exactly. It is near the church, and in the very middle of the village: nothing could be better.' I agreed with him, and we had your furniture carried there when it arrived, hoping you would also be pleased."

Madame Derville was deeply touched, and could

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hardly trust herself to speak. The old Grange had been her mother's own property, inherited from her parents, whom Madame Derville had visited there frequently when a child. Had she herself married in the province, it would have descended to her. She pressed Cousin Eulalie's hand, saying, in a broken voice, "Michel was right: I shall be most thankful to live there; and you and he must decide on the rent I am to pay."

"There will be plenty of time to think about that after you are settled," replied Madame Brémont.

The old lady's satisfaction was sufficient compensation for the annoyance she had suffered from her husband's persistent refusal to let the old house to any other tenant. In general, he was contented to leave the entire management of affairs to his wife, who was eminently capable; but, as she sometimes said, sharply, "When he once takes it into his head to be obstinate, no one in the world can move him;" and so it had been with reference to the Grange.

"It is a good thing," continued Madame Brémont, "that all the land formerly belonging to the property is let for farms; you would not have known what to do with it; now there is only the little garden, which is in excellent order, for I had it dug and planted in the spring."

"If we are successful," said Madame Derville, "for which we shall have to thank you and Michel, I may need a small pasture for a cow, and a bit of meadow to make a play-ground for the children; but we will think of that later. Now I shall make a visit to the Grange. I know my way quite well, and I shall see you again at dinner-time."

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Madame Brémont did not insist on accompanying her guest. She had many household matters to oversee, and she understood that Madame Derville preferred no companion except Marie, who, having finally made her appearance and eaten a hearty breakfast, was delighted to join her grandmother and have a look at her new home.

Monsieur Brémont's house stood at a little distance from the town; but a short walk brought one into the principal street, which was lined with houses built uniformly, whether large or small, of the gray stone of the country. To Marie, who was accustomed to buildings of red brick, or to dazzling white fronts, such as that of La Mivoie, the aspect of the town was very gloomy. She saw no fruit-trellises on the walls, no trees in the little gardens. But, fortunately, there was an abundance of flowers in boxes and pots on almost every window-sill; and, above all, at each corner of the street, and through each opening between the houses, one caught a glimpse of the sea, with its waves dancing and sparkling in the morning sun.

"That is the reason why there is so little foliage on this side of the town," said Madame Derville: "the trees cannot stand against the winds that blow in from the ocean; nothing but these houses and walls of stone can resist the gales. But on the other side, in the valley, you will see how luxuriant and smiling everything looks."

"Nevertheless," thought Marie, "I shall love the sea better than the trees; and I hope the windows of our house open on this side."

Marie's hope was realized. Doubtless the Grange had

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been built by an old sailor, unwilling to separate himself from the sight and sound of his beloved ocean. The house stood on a little eminence, and almost every door and window opened directly upon the sea. The situation had deterred many persons from desiring to rent it; nearly every inhabitant of Brucourt preferring a view of the valley. "It is not as if we were nothing but fishermen," they said, disdainfully; for the towns-people proper looked with profound contempt on the little fishing-hamlet, scattered along the coast, whose denizens depended on their nets for a living.

No one knew Madame Derville, and she recognized no one. From time to time she showed Marie an old house in which she had played years and years ago, or pointed out a shop in which her mother had been accustomed to make purchases. She even found upon the signs some familiar names; but the little children of the old days had succeeded their parents, and children's children had in turn followed them, since she had left Brucourt. Again a tide of sad memories rushed into her heart, and she became more and more silent as they walked along; so that when at last she stopped before a door, Marie exclaimed, in a tone of intense relief and pleasure, "Here we are at home!"

The key grated in the lock. They entered, and Madame Derville started back in astonishment. Instead of the utter disorder and confusion she had expected to see, she beheld the rooms comfortably arranged, and almost ready for immediate occupation. There stood the old dining-table from La Mivoie, covered with its shining waxed cloth; the chairs were neatly ranged along the wall; the floor was polished;

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the porcelain stove was clean and glittering; fair white curtains hung in the windows, and in the chambers the beds were freshly made.

All the furniture of La Mivoie had been packed and forwarded in advance of the travelers. "You would do much better to sell it all," said the old notary; but Madame Derville refused to entertain such an idea. "It is very old-fashioned," said she, "and would bring a very small price; besides, I should be completely lost without my old secretary and chest of drawers standing always before my eyes."

The household goods of the good grandmother had been carefully arranged in the chamber intended for her, and the room looked almost like the old one at La Mivoie. In the room destined for "the boarding scholars," as Marie said, importantly, were piled up all the boxes, trunks, and packages that were as yet untouched; but the house was entirely free from that air of desolation and discomfort which Madame Derville had prepared herself to meet. She sat down in her own arm-chair beside the window, her heart overflowing with gratitude, while Marie ran hither and thither, up and down, leaving no spot unexplored. "The garden is in the same beautiful order as the house," she cried, joyfully. "And there is a well, grandmother; but we must have it covered, lest some of the little scholars should fall into it."

"And Marie herself?"

"Oh, of course *I* should know how to take care of myself! We have plenty of fruit, too, grandmother, so that we can give the children pears and apples for their lunch. And only think! the kitchen is all nicely

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arranged for us! the saucepans are hung upon the wall, and the dishes are in their places! How very kind Cousin Eulalie has been! She has left almost nothing for us to do."

"Do not be too sure of that, my child," said Madame Derville, rising to join Marie in her investigations. She cast a glance through the window upon the bright, sparkling sea, and took courage from the sunshine that illuminated it. In that moment she endeavored to cast her burden upon God, and resolved to enter cheerfully and bravely upon her appointed task. She could not help smiling as she answered Marie's question, "Who is to be our cook?"

"I," replied her grandmother; "as we have not yet any of those scholars you are so fond of talking about."

Marie was not a little shocked. "But, grandmother, you expect them; and surely you do not mean that you will always attend to the cooking?"

"I hope not; but I intend to be my own cook at present."

Marie made an inward resolution, then and there. "I, at least, will eat nothing but bread and cheese, or I will beg grandmother to teach me how to cook. It will be quite too tiresome for her to stand all day over the fire, as Séraphine does. I shall soon be able to do it." There was no vanity in the child's determination,—nothing but a sincere wish to relieve and assist her grandmother.

It was now nearly noon, and time to return to "Père Brémont's," as the house was still called, though to the present occupant the respectful title of

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"Monsieur" was always accorded. "He is worth thousands," said the towns-folk; "his wife brought him a good fortune, and he is richer than all the rest of the province put together." The name by which the house now went dated back to the time when the old farmer, Madame Derville's father, lived in it; and now the familiar words, "Père Brémont's," fell upon the stricken heart of his daughter, grown old in her turn.

Dinner was ready when she returned, and Madame Brémont came out from the kitchen, where she had just found it necessary to administer a sharp rebuke to Coralie, the servant, who was not a little flurried by the addition of so many guests to the household.

Marie threw her arms round "Cousin Eulalie's" neck in a transport of gratitude. "Oh, cousin, how hard you have worked for us, and how beautifully our house is arranged!" And, without waiting for an answer or a kiss in return for her warm embrace, she flew up the stairs, and met her mother coming slowly down with Jean in her arms. "Oh, mamma!" she cried, "you do not know all that my cousin has done for us! Nearly everything is unpacked; there are only about twelve boxes left, for I counted them. The beds are made, and the curtains hung; there are chairs and tables in the dining-room, and all the pots and pans are hung up in the kitchen. Oh, it is so pretty! We have now only to go ourselves; and, mamma, we can see the ocean all the time!"

Madame André could hardly understand Marie's delight. She could never have done what Madame Brémont had accomplished; not that indolence or dis-

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inclination would have held her back, but timidity and a fear of mistaking the wishes of the newly-arrived inmates.

Madame Brémont read surprise in her face, and said quickly,—for she was less at ease with the younger than with the older cousin,—"I must ask pardon for what I have done; perhaps it was rather indiscreet and officious to open your boxes; but I touched nothing except the furniture, and my only thought was to spare you and Cousin Ernestine some fatigue."

"On the contrary," said Madame André, ashamed of having looked a little puzzled at first, "I join heartily with Marie in thanking you. You have been only too good and thoughtful, and have relieved me of a weight of care. I cannot tell you how much I have dreaded arriving in that strange house, with everything to do and no one to help us. I imagined myself making every kind of blunder,—perhaps even shutting up poor little Jean, by mistake, in some old trunk!"

At this they all laughed heartily, with the exception of Master Jean, who, discovering that he was the subject of discussion, felt obliged to protest by crying.

Madame Derville had said very little since her return to the house; but her gratitude was no less evident than that of Marie. She took Madame Brémont's hands in her own, and said, in a trembling voice, "I hope you know that I would have been glad to do as much for you in a like case."

Monsieur Brémont, who had come into the room, gave his wife no time to reply, but exclaimed, "You have no idea, Ernestine, what an amusement it has been for her; I could hardly keep her at home at all,

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and she could with difficulty spare the time to provide anything for me to eat."

In a few days the Derville family was domiciled in the old Grange; and then Monsieur Brémont renewed his mock lamentations over the frequent absences of his wife. She was so thoroughly executive, intelligent, and willing, and so well acquainted with all the people and resources of the town, that she naturally became prime mover in all the arrangements connected with her cousin's installation in the new home. Day after day she labored untiringly in their service; but one evening she returned, and, seating herself wearily on the first chair that offered, exclaimed, "Well, everything is finished! I believe there is not even another nail to be driven; the collector and the notary may send their children to-morrow, if they wish; their rooms are all ready."

"And may I send also, to bring back my lost wife?" asked Monsieur Brémont, teasingly.

She laughed, and replied, "Well, well, you must not grumble, for I have some nice custards for your supper."

Now, Cousin Michel had a special weakness for these same custards.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE BEGINNING.

THE collector and the notary had promised Madame Brémont to place their children at the "new boarding-school;" and the little girls already held their heads very high, looking rather scornfully upon their play-mates who were taught at the village school.

But Madame Derville was not satisfied with so small a beginning. "In order," said she, "to give up all our time, as we desire, to the children, we must keep a good servant; and we cannot afford to engage one unless we have at least six scholars."

She prepared for circulation a prospectus of the school, in the names of Mesdames Derville. Madame André would have modestly declined to appear as one of the principals, but her mother-in-law overruled her at once. "I give the sanction of age, and you will furnish the knowledge. You are the one who has passed all the examinations and who can display all the diplomas. Without your aid, my Jeanne, I could teach the little ones nothing more than to read, write, and cipher, and to say their prayers."

Marie opened her eyes very wide at this meagre enumeration of her grandmother's talents; but her astonishment was not nearly so great as that of Madame André when she found, on the very first day, that she

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was really necessary for the success of the new undertaking. "My name and my diplomas are actually to be of service," she said to herself. "How glad I am now, that my father insisted upon my passing those strict examinations! My mother thought it was useless, and a waste of time; but now my education will help to keep a roof over our heads."

The small income which Captain Derville had been able to settle upon his wife had sufficed, with economy, for her own and her children's expenses while she remained at La Mivoie, but would not support them in this strange country and in the altered circumstances of the family. So Madame André wrote to her husband, "It is not only to assist the dear mother that I am going to work, but also to help in providing for our children."

Madame Brémont entered zealously into her cousin's wish to enlarge the number of scholars. "Six children, you say? I will bring them, if they are to be found in the province. After all, I need find but three, to add to the three already promised in the town." "I must try to make the thing succeed," she thought, "or we may be obliged to take them all into our own house again until the captain returns. Nothing would please Michel more." Kind-hearted as she was, she would not have been so eager as her husband to burden herself for an indefinite time with so large an addition to her family; and she had therefore a double motive in endeavoring to further Madame Derville's wishes.

One fine morning she set forth on her quest for pupils. The old horse was harnessed to a still older-looking chaise, and the gardener's son, a lad of ten

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years, accompanied his mistress, to hold the reins while she should make her visits. Madame Brémont always drove herself, according to the custom of the country; and the office was an easy one, as the horse was by no means a spirited courser. He was well acquainted with the roads leading to all the farm-houses before which he was accustomed to stop, and never resisted his driver unless he was prevented from turning in at some familiar gate. This morning he thought it very hard to be obliged to pass several houses on the road. "I am not going to buy poultry or eggs, I tell thee," said Madame Brémont to the stubborn animal; "I am looking for little girls, and it is to the great houses we must go." Still, old Barbichon would not understand, and finally brought upon himself a smart blow, which helped wonderfully to quicken his comprehension.

Madame Brémont went from one of her neighbors to another, begging them to send their children to Mesdames Derville: "My cousins. The mother is a superior woman; the daughter was educated by her father, who was a professor in the Lyceum of *Henri Quatre*, in Paris. She is an excellent scholar, and passed all the examinations."

"Is she, then, a *savant*, like Monsieur Brémont?" one would ask.

"Well, perhaps she is not *quite* so learned as he; that would be unnecessary for a teacher of little girls."

The parents seldom agreed after hearing Madame Brémont's recommendations of her cousins. In one house the father would consent readily, on account of the close neighborhood of the school and of the great esteem in which he held Monsieur and Madame Bré-

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mont. "These ladies," he would say, "must be fine women, since they are her cousins." Or perhaps it would be the mother alone who desired to avail herself of the opportunity to give her daughter an exceptionally good education. Then the father would object, saying, "The child will learn enough at the village school, and that does not cost nearly so much." The price demanded by Madame Derville was, of course, greater, though still quite moderate.

"A child cannot be fed and cared for and taught for nothing," replied one mother. "She will receive a good education and learn other things besides; and I do not want all her little friends to become good scholars while she is left behind." "It costs nothing to keep her at home," said the imperturbable farmer; "and she will be no worse off a few years hence because she cannot play on the piano or speak English." But in most cases the entreaties of the daughter, added to the ambition of the mother, proved irresistible; and so it came to pass that, in a few days, all the so-called "rich people" were talking about the new boarding-school at Brucourt.

The arrangements for receiving pupils at the Grange were perfected. Fortunately, the great presses at La Mivoie had contained a stock of house-linen more than sufficient for the needs of the expected additions to the household of the Grange. Each child was to bring her own bed, sheets, and towels; also, a knife, fork, and spoon. The old house was amply provided, on each floor, with cupboards and presses, in which were to be stored the clothing and other possessions of the new-comers.

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Madame Derville went up and down, planning and contriving, — Marie following faithfully, holding the nails and pegs for which her grandmother found place in the different rooms, and which were to add to the comfort of the occupants after their trunks should be unpacked and stowed away in the roomy attics.

Madame Brémont's efforts had been crowned with success. Eight little girls, whose ages ranged from seven to twelve years, were to arrive at the close of their summer holidays. A servant was already procured,—a *protégée* of Madame Brémont,—who entered upon her duties of housekeeper, cook, and maid with energy and good will.

Madame Derville welcomed her gladly, and instructed her as to the details of her work; and Marie could have embraced her, so charmed was she to see her grandmother relieved from kitchen cares and occupations. "I could not enjoy my soup," said she, "when I remembered how grandmother had tired and heated herself in making it." It must be confessed, however, that Malvina's soup was very inferior to that made by Madame Derville.

Marie had one bitter disappointment in the very beginning. There was not a single child younger than herself. "And I shall be of no use at all!" said she, despairingly; "there will be nothing for me to do but to take care of Jean when mamma is busy." But soon her usual good nature and high spirits returned; and she consoled herself by thinking, "Surely I shall find *something* to do; I can at least hear a class recite a lesson: with the book open before me, I could not possibly make a mistake." And she saw herself

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already, in imagination, installed as under-teacher of at least one class, if no more.

"Nine children to begin with! That is not bad," said Madame Derville to her daughter-in-law, two days after the school was opened; "I could not have expected or desired a more encouraging commencement."

Madame André raised her head from her books, over which she was poring, recalling carefully the plan of study pursued by her father, and trying to decide which branches to take up, and which to lay aside, in the education of these little country children. "Nine, my mother? Have you heard of another one to-day?" she asked.

"Do you forget Marie?" demanded the grandmother, laughing.

Madame André smiled also, as she answered, "Marie has herself taken so very important a position ever since we first talked about our school, that I have almost fancied her own education completed!"

"And the dear child," continued Madame Derville, laughing still, "cannot write a word, nor do a single sum correctly, and is only just beginning to study English!"

Poor Marie! how deep would have been her humiliation had she overheard this conversation! The child, innocent in her ignorance, really believed herself capable of assisting in the instruction of others; and to know how low her acquirements were rated by her mother and grandmother would have been indeed mortifying; but happily she was sound asleep, and never dreamed of such a downfall.

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Jean had fallen into the excellent habit of going to sleep alone, as soon as he was laid in his cradle; the sea air made him drowsy, and he was put to bed with eyes still open. Marie also retired very early, that she might not disturb him. The two little beds stood within the wide curtains of Madame André's large one. "My happiest time," she wrote to her husband, "is at night, when, with both our children close beside me, I can think of you, in peace and quiet; I am *almost* happy then: *quite* happy I shall not be until two more years are gone!"

The captain did not suffer so much in the separation as did his wife. He rejoiced in the command of his splendid frigate, and he had already touched at several of the ports he had so greatly desired to visit. His letters were filled with detailed and interesting accounts of all that he saw, but his wife waited in vain for counsel, directions, or suggestions relative to her new undertaking. "When six months must elapse between your questions and my answers," he wrote sometimes, "how can I possibly advise you? I trust everything to you and to my mother." This was all the consolation Madame André had, while she was so anxiously longing for his approbation, and so fearful lest he might be displeased on hearing of the step she had taken.

"What else could I do?" asked her mother-in-law. "It was impossible for you to remain at La Mivoie, since it no longer belonged to us. It was to me, not to the walls of the old house, that your husband confided you."

Madame André was only too glad to have some one to obey, and was willing to be guided wholly by Ma-

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dame Derville. "I said *nine* children. I had better say ten, without counting Jean," thought the grandmother sometimes, impatient at the hesitation and timidity of her daughter; but she always reproached herself for her injustice. "Suppose I had to do with a thoughtless, giddy-brained woman, or a proud or disagreeable one, how much worse it would be!" she reflected, and forgave Madame André for her timidity, redoubling her kindness towards her, as if to make up for having mentally wronged her.

At such times, Marie was occasionally a little jealous. "You give more kisses to mamma than to me!" she would say, reproachfully.

Everything was now ready; the beds were neatly made up for the daughters of the collector and the notary, who were to arrive first; and the other rooms awaited the belongings of the pupils who were to occupy them. The large bedroom on the ground-floor, once occupied, as Madame Derville well remembered, by her grandmother, who slept in a bed with wonderfully grand curtains of flowered chintz, was now converted into a school-room. The "refectory," as Marie persisted in calling the dining-room, was on one side, and on the second floor was a room arranged for a parlor, where all were to spend the evenings together.

"I desire to instruct the children in good manners, as well as in book-learning," said Madame André, who had begged for a parlor. "They will never have any idea of society," said she, "if they see nothing beyond their school-room; let us make well-bred girls of them all."

Madame Derville smiled; she had already en-

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countered two or three of her future scholars, and she thought it would be rather an arduous task to "civilize" them, as Madame André desired; but she would not discourage her from making the attempt. "*I* shall only try to make *women* of them," she said to Marie, who did not understand how that could be.

"But they are only little girls, grandmother; the oldest is not more than twelve years old."

"Just old enough to begin to learn to be a woman," replied the grandmother.

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CHAPTER XIII.

AT SCHOOL.

MADAME DERVILLE stood at the door of her house, before which a cart, containing two women, a little girl, and several trunks, had just stopped. Madame André had tried to dissuade her mother-in-law from going to the door, begging her to remain in the parlor. "In Paris," she said, "the principal of the school always sits in her *salon*, and the scholars are brought in and presented to her."

"Very good, my dear Jeanne; do you take your seat in the parlor, and I will lead the little pupils up to you. You are, after all, the real head of the school."

Madame André blushed, and quickly followed the old lady to the door. They both went forward to help the new-comers; but Madame Derville started back with an exclamation of surprise. "Is it you, Florine?" she cried. And, at the same moment, an enormously stout woman, who sat upon a chair in the cart, into which she had mounted with infinite difficulty, exclaimed,—

"There! I told you so! It is really Ernestine!" She made a violent effort to rise, but in vain.

"Wait a moment, mamma," said her daughter, who, with the assistance of Madame Derville, at last

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succeeded in placing her on the ground; but she was so exhausted and out of breath that it was necessary to bring another chair and allow her to rest before entering the house.

"You see," she gasped out, in a stifled voice, "it was not for nothing that I made up my mind to come; I, who seldom or never leave the house. I wanted to see my Céleste comfortably settled, but I did not know how well I had done for her. Léonie insisted that I was mistaken, and that Madame Derville was not Ernestine Brémont. Well, well! it gives me real pleasure to see you again!"

She did not venture on using the familiar "thee;" but Madame Derville hastened to relieve her evident embarrassment by saying, "And I am truly glad, Florine, to see *thee* once more."

The children were for the moment forgotten, as were Madame André and the mother of Céleste, while the grandmothers, the two old friends, talked together. Madame Derville read immediately in the smooth, unwrinkled face, rosy cheeks, and robust figure of Florine, now Madame Evrard, that her life had been an easy and prosperous one. She was the wife of a great cattle-dealer, and had one child, a daughter, who was married to a quiet, respectable farmer of extensive means.

Florine was in her turn no less able to see in Madame Derville's countenance the traces of a far different experience. "How old and thin she has become! Nothing is left of her old self but her eyes, which are as bright as ever," thought Madame Evrard.

The conversation went on, and the two little girls, finding themselves unnoticed, tried to talk with each

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other; but they did not make much headway. Marie assumed the *rôle* of lady of the house, but Céleste declined all response to her advances; and Marie, a little abashed, but more offended, took refuge in silence, remaining close to her grandmother's side.

The two mothers went through the house; Madame André explaining the domestic arrangements with a frankness and simplicity that won the heart of the rich farmer's wife. "My mind is quite easy," she said to herself, "about leaving Céleste here; they will not ill-treat her, and I think they will give her enough to eat." This last after leaving the clean, well-arranged kitchen and the tidy servant-woman, who was about bringing into the parlor a tray containing cake and wine.

It had been decided that it was necessary to offer a slight refreshment to the parents when they accompanied the scholars, and some old wine that had been long stored away in the cellar of La Mivoie was devoted to this purpose; reserving a small quantity to be used in case of sickness. A barrel of cider for every-day use was already deposited in the cellar of the Grange.

Before the guests departed, Madame Derville tried to put Céleste through a brief examination. "Can you read yet, my dear?" she inquired.

The child hung her head and made no reply whatever; but her grandmother proudly replied for her, "Yes, indeed; she can read as well as any grown person, and I shall be sadly at a loss for some one to read the newspapers to me, and find out all the murders and such things, when I have lost my glasses."

Marie looked with astonishment at the little girl;

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she herself was never allowed even to open a newspaper; and Madame Derville resolved that Céleste also should be debarred, while under her care, from reading about "murders and such things." She asked again, "Have you begun writing, my child?"

Still Céleste remained speechless; but she thrust her hand awkwardly into her grandmother's pocket and drew out a crumpled copy-book filled with large and small letters, which she gave to Madame Derville.

Madame received and inspected it, saying, "Not so bad for a child; we may call it quite beyond the average."

Céleste blushed, but this time from pride and pleasure; and she gathered courage to say, in the lowest possible tones, "And I know two fables,—The City Rat and the Country Rat, and The Fox and the Grapes."

"Is it possible? Well, recite one of the fables for me," said the mistress, kindly.

Céleste boldly left her grandmother's knee, took up her station in front of Madame Derville, and with arms hanging straight down, feet turned out, and head on one side, began: "Once on a time a city rat——" Here she hesitated; but Marie, whose eyes never left the young orator's face, and who had learned the same fable perfectly, long before leaving La Mivoie, murmured, in a low tone, "invited the country rat;" Céleste caught eagerly at the clue, and shot off like an arrow, gobbling up the words with astonishing rapidity, running one verse into another without a pause between, and reciting the whole in a sing-song style, and with a shrill voice that made Marie open her eyes wider than ever, and grated most unpleasantly upon Madame Derville's ears. At last she stopped, breathless and tri-

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umphant; but before her auditors had time to compliment her on her performance, she commenced The Fox and the Grapes, rushing through it at the same speed, and in the same piercing tone. By the time she reached the last lines, her voice rose to such a pitch that Marie could not help laughing, and it was with great difficulty that Madame Derville preserved her gravity. She thanked Céleste, however, saying,—

"You know the fables very well, and I see that you have a good memory; we shall give you some pretty verses to learn, and when you know them perfectly, it will be best to recite more slowly, so that we shall be able to understand what you say."

But this suggestion did not please Céleste. "At school," said she, with pride, "there was not a single scholar who could speak so fast as I!"

Marie was dying of anxiety to give her first lesson. "I can recite some fables also," she began, eagerly; but her grandmother motioned to her to be silent. "I could have shown Céleste how to récite properly," she thought.

Madame Evrard sat listening, lost in admiration, as she always was when Céleste exhibited her acquirements; but her good sense showed her the wisdom of Madame Derville's gentle criticism. "It is quite true," said she, "that you go rather too fast; your father has said several times that he does not know the true history of those rats. To be sure, we have plenty of them in our barns, and he might find out all about them; but you recite the story of your two rats so fast that he cannot possibly understand what you say."

Céleste made no reply; she was a good child enough,

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of a quiet, equable disposition, and did not desire to argue the question; but she was none the less quite convinced of her own merit. "When the inspectors came to our school," she reflected, "I was always called upon to recite, and every one remarked how well I knew my fables."

It appeared, from further questioning, that Céleste knew nothing whatever of plain sewing, and could not even hem a pocket-handkerchief; but she had worked a pair of slippers for her father.

"Never mind," said Madame Derville; "she will be taught to sew well here."

The grandmother was pleased, but the mother wished for some fancy work also: "Some artificial flowers, perhaps," she suggested.

"I believe my daughter-in-law used to do such things, long ago," said Madame Derville. "How is it, Jeanne?"

Madame André smiled, saying she feared she had forgotten entirely how to make such things.

"I should like her to know enough," said the mother, "to be able to make a rose or two, or a marigold, or pink, so that her young friends who have gone to school at Cherbourg may not look down upon her."

Madame Derville tried to change the subject; but this question of making artificial flowers was a serious one in the mind of the rich farmer's wife; and she continued to dwell upon it long after she had left the Grange and was driving placidly home.

Both ladies were much grieved at parting with Céleste. "Poor child!" they said, with tears.

"I hope she will be well and happy!" fervently ejaculated the grandmother."

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"And that she will come home a lady," added the mother. "Her father will leave her plenty of money, and she need never have any trouble in her life."

The grandmother consoled her daughter as well as she could. "Fortunately, the Grange is not far away, and we shall be able to see the child very often. She is in excellent hands, unless Ernestine Brémont is greatly changed."

"And they will not starve her; that is a comfort," said Léonie, who had contrived to have a peep at the supper that was being prepared in the kitchen of the Grange.

The sitting-room was very quiet and lonely that evening without Céleste; and the good farmer, on his return from his last visit to the stables, where all his choice animals were comfortably settled for the night, drew his hand more than once over eyes filled with tears, as he thought of the little girl.

"What is the use of grieving?" said his wife. "We have parted with the child for her own good." But she was, in reality, as heavy-hearted as he; and they passed nearly the whole evening in silence.

Madame Evrard retired at an early hour. "I must go and weep by myself," she said to her daughter.

Céleste, however, shed no tears at the Grange.

By nightfall, all the other scholars had arrived, and the old house was full. "We could not possibly receive two, or even one, more, without making new arrangements," said Madame Derville, as she walked through the sleeping-rooms.

In the parlor, the children were all gathered round Madame André, who was teaching them a new game.

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"We shall do no lessons to-day," she said; "but that is no reason for our being quite idle." And soon the gay laughter of the children was mingled with the names of cities, towns, and villages. The game was called The Post-Office; Marie had chosen the name of Brucourt, and she was constantly moving,—changing places with London, Paris, Lyons, Cherbourg, etc. The players ran, tumbled, shouted; all the timidity and awkwardness of first acquaintance vanished, and the utmost familiarity and friendliness prevailed. Madame André, who acted as postmaster, had hard work to keep all the different mail-coaches in order, so animated did the game become.

Madame Derville looked in from time to time, with a pleasant smile. She was busily engaged in sorting the various articles belonging to her newly-arrived scholars, and keeping a watchful eye meanwhile upon the preparations for supper; for Malvina was scarcely equal to providing for the suddenly increased number of guests. A table with eleven plates! and the soup very nearly scorched! But Madame Derville's observant eye and ready hand averted that catastrophe, and the hungry children were not disappointed when, with appetites sharpened by their frolic, they were placed round the table, each in her appointed seat.

They were only children! But the awkwardness of some, and the mistakes and bad manners of others, effectually destroyed all Madame André's enjoyment of the meal. She had been full of gayety and fun, and entirely at her ease, when surrounded by the children at their play; but now she felt timid and restless, besides being inexpressibly shocked at the table man-

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ners of the new-comers. She was about to reprove those nearest her; but a look from Madame Derville warned her that during this first meal indulgence must be granted.

Marie was very much surprised to find that supper was finished without a word from her mother as to the manners which shocked her not a little. "Why does not mamma tell Edmée not to eat her beans with her knife, and Céleste not to put her elbows on the table?" thought Marie. "If I should do that, grandmother would make me drum upon it with my elbows for an hour, to cure me!"

"Example will be more effectual, my dear Jeanne, than precept," said Madame Derville, consolingly, after the evening prayer had been said, and all the little ones were safely disposed of in bed. "You would have frightened them sadly had you lectured them this evening upon their abominable manners. I saw that you were too much annoyed to eat any supper; but you shall have it now." And the good old lady produced a plate that she had set away for her daughter. "You must make a good supper before you go to bed. You are like a child yourself, Jeanne; two hours ago you laughed and played with the merriest, and now you are ready to cry!"

The tears were indeed in Madame André's eyes, as she embraced her mother without speaking. Presently she rose to retire, and said, in a low voice, "Forgive me, my mother; this is the first day: I shall not be so foolish again."

"Go and kiss Marie and Jean," said Madame Derville, bidding her an affectionate good-night; "then

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you will be happy, and sleep well. I shall first look in upon our dormitories."

An hour later, the whole household was asleep, and Madame Derville, saying to herself, "I shall need all my strength for to-morrow," committed herself and her cares to God, and lay down,—weary, but with a hopeful, trusting heart.

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CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER GRANDMOTHER.

THE school was fairly begun; classes were formed, and the pupils divided, according to age and ability. Madame André assumed the entire charge of the older children, and succeeded admirably; but there were times when she was depressed and discouraged. Honorine Vignet seemed utterly incapable of learning the simplest rules in orthography; while Edmée Biron found it equally impossible to write a single page without covering it with blots. "And yet one is twelve, the other eleven years old!" said Madame André, mournfully, as she sat down for the one precious hour of quiet conversation that the two mistresses secured every evening, and during which they talked over all their cares, each endeavoring to lighten the burden of the other. "They are both intelligent enough about other things; Honorine recited a geography lesson today which surprised me, knowing for how short a time she has studied it; and as for Edmée, she is by no means awkward when she has a needle in her hand; she reads well, and has almost lost that terrible village-school accent which she brought here. But give her a pen, and her fingers seem to become entirely useless; while the ink runs just where it will!" And Madame André

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sighed as she attempted to take out, with oxalic acid, several great ink-spots bestowed by Edmée upon her dress, but saw the color fade away under the effect of the potent remedy.

Madame Derville sympathized with her over the ruined dress, and then said, laughing, "Marie progresses wonderfully in my class; I fear I shall soon be forced to pass her on to you; for if she continues to work so hard she will be far in advance of her class-mates. It is surprising to see how much her self-love and ambition have accomplished. You remember how difficult it was at La Mivoie to teach her even how to read?"

Madame André looked a little hurt. "Marie is anxious," said she, "to set a good example to the other scholars; I do not think she is actuated altogether by self-love."

"Well, well, we will not quarrel about Marie's good qualities," replied the grandmother, who amused herself sometimes by teasing Madame André on the tender point of her children's excellence. "But you will see, when Marie goes into your class, that she will never be happy or contented unless she is first in everything."

The brave, judicious old lady always endeavored, by talking cheerfully and jestingly of the troubles and annoyances that beset her daughter-in-law, and which were confided to her in this quiet evening hour, to strengthen and sustain her weaker companion.

But seldom or never did she utter a word with reference to her own weariness and vexation of spirit; the road was for her also a steep and thorny one, but she never complained. Her strong will could not always, however, prevent her from succumbing to physical

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fatigue; and as she talked thus lightly with Madame André, she suddenly leaned back in her arm-chair, and her knitting-needles fell from her hand.

Madame André was distressed. "You are worn out, my mother!" she exclaimed. "You have far too much to do and to think about. Why will you not confine your duties to the school-room, and allow me to relieve you from the housekeeping cares? Surely I could manage all that, under your directions."

"Oh, it is nothing. I was only a little sleepy for a moment," replied Madame Derville, briskly picking up her needles and beginning to knit again; but she was very pale, and soon made an excuse for retiring at an earlier hour than usual. Gladly she lay down upon her bed, praying, fervently, "O my Father! give me strength to carry, without fainting, the heavy burden Thou hast laid upon me!"

Sometimes our prayers are answered before we have uttered them, because God knows our wants so well. While Madame Derville was bending beneath the weight of so many cares,—superintending her house, providing for the daily requirements of her large family, and teaching in the school for several hours of each day,—relief was coming to her from a wholly unforeseen source.

One day, at post-time, the children were all eagerly watching, according to their custom, for the letter-carrier. His arrival formed one of their daily excitements, as "a letter from mamma" was always among the possibilities for some one of the little group. The rich farmers, the graziers and cattle-merchants did not often accomplish the feat of writing to their daughters;

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but the mothers found many a quiet moment in which to indite a letter to Honorine, to Céleste, or to Edmée. Madame Derville had not established the strict rules observed in ordinary boarding-schools; she never read the children's letters before sending them, nor opened those of the mothers, although these were frequently brought to her by the little ones of their own accord.

"It is much more pleasant here than at Cherbourg," said Honorine, who had passed three months in a convent-school there; "the Sisters used to read every letter I wrote to mamma, and it made me very angry. One does not write letters to one's mother to be read by all the world!"

An immense deal of scribbling was done at the Grange, and there was scarcely a day in which the old carrier failed to deliver answers to the impatient children.

"The 'letter from mamma' is for me, to-day," said Madame André, smiling, as Malvina brought in a letter during the recitation of the history-class. But she quietly put it in her pocket, without even a glance at its contents.

"How *can* Madame wait until school is over to read her letter?" whispered one little girl to her neighbor. "I am always in such haste to read mine, that I often tear them by opening them so quickly."

Immediately after the history-class came another recitation; and then dinner was served, during which meal Madame André was obliged to keep a strict watch over her youthful charges. Their manners were greatly improved, but careful supervision was still

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necessary: so that it was not until play-hour in the afternoon that Madame André could retire to a quiet corner of the garden and read the letter from her mother, received hours before. She opened it without feeling any agitation or excitement; preparing to enjoy it, with that sense of ease and pleasure which we experience in opening the letters of those we love, and for whom we have nothing to fear. But, as she read, her countenance changed; a look of utter perplexity was upon her face; the letter fell to the ground; and as she sat there, her eyes filled with tears, a troop of noisy children at play passed by her. Foremost were Marie and Céleste, running a race.

This was quite a new accomplishment for Céleste; the enormous size of her grandmother and the indolence of her mother had resulted in her following their example of slow walking; indeed, she seemed scarcely able to walk at all, much less to run, when she arrived at the Grange; but now she could outstrip Marie, who was by far the most active among the children.

On they ran, with all their speed, laughing and shouting in high glee; but as they approached the bench where Madame André sat, sad and troubled, Marie observed her mother and slackened her pace. Céleste, who was but a step behind, caught her dress, exclaiming, triumphantly, "I have won! I touched you before you reached the bounds!"

Marie disengaged herself from the grasp of Céleste. "You would not have touched me if I had not wished to speak to mamma; I allowed you to catch me on purpose."

"Oh, yes; you say that because I won the race instead

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of yourself," murmured Céleste, discontentedly; but Marie did not listen; she put her arms gently about her mother's neck, saying, softly,—

"Mamma dear, what is the matter? Have you been vexed by any of the scholars?"

Marie could not imagine any troubles beyond those caused by the negligence or disobedience of the pupils. Her mother returned her embrace with a kiss, but made no reply to her questions. Marie was at a loss; she invariably carried all her own little griefs, annoyances, and vexations straight to Madame Derville, in the full assurance that grandmother would smooth away all difficulties; but she was endowed with unusual tact and discretion for so young a child, and did not dream of running now to tell her grandmother that "mamma was crying all alone upon the bench under the great tamarind-tree." She was, however, much relieved when her mother inquired,—

"Do you know, Marie, where your grandmother is?"

"I saw her, a little while ago, in the kitchen," replied Marie. "She was teaching Malvina how to prepare the apple-marmalade; but Malvina did not look as if she understood."

"If there was so much to explain to Malvina, perhaps I shall find grandmother still in the kitchen." And Madame André rose and walked quickly towards the house, remembering the rapidity with which the old lady passed from one occupation to another, never counting her steps or saving herself from the incessant walking up and down stairs.

She had just left the kitchen, and was entering the dining-room, when Madame André met her, and said,

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"I should like, my mother, to talk with you for a few moments."

Madame Derville only paused to give some final directions to her servant. "Malvina, put away your tray, and sweep up the room before you begin to pare the apples; you know how much I dislike to see crumbs upon the floor." Having thus relieved her mind of her domestic cares, she prepared to follow Madame André into the garden; but as she looked into her daughter's troubled face, all thought of Malvina, of the apples, and of the probably imperfect style in which the girl would, unassisted, lay the table for supper, vanished from the old lady's mind. She led Madame André straightway into her own room, and, standing before her, asked, eagerly, but in tones of affectionate interest, "Now, my daughter, what is the matter? I know that it is nothing concerning André, because we had letters from him only three days ago, and you can have no later tidings."

"No, it is nothing about André; but I have just received a letter from my mother, and she is very unhappy." Here Madame André's voice failed, but Madame Derville's questioning look obliged her to continue; and with an effort she added, "You know that since my father's death my mother has lived with my sister Eugénie; but her husband is now going to Algiers, upon railway business which will oblige him to change his residence from time to time. They have two children, who will be, of course, a great charge, and they are unwilling to take my mother with them. Charles (my brother-in-law) has told her so, very harshly, and has made her feel that she is *de trop* in his house. Even

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had he treated her kindly, however, the long journey and comparatively rough life would be too hard for a person of her age. She has never been able to live happily with my sister Marguérite, or rather with the two old aunts of her husband, who govern the household; and she has not sufficient means to live alone. It is sad to think of her, my poor mother! She has had five children, and three daughters still remain to her; yet in her old age she is left without a home!" And Madame André burst into tears.

Madame Derville listened attentively to her daughter's recital, and then said, cheerfully, "And why should not your mother come here to us? She can help us in the school, or with the housekeeping, as pleases her best; and you will enjoy caring for her, and rendering those duties which you owe to her. And when our three little purses are united, we shall be able to live comfortably,—that is, with the help of the scholars," she finished, smilingly.

That bright smile chased away the lines of trouble from Madame André's brow. She had listened eagerly to Madame Derville's words, but it seemed almost impossible that a practical solution could so soon be found for the difficulty that had appeared insurmountable only an hour before. Here was a way by which her mother would be relieved from anxiety as to her future home; she herself would be enabled to perform a daughter's part towards her beloved parent, and Madame Derville's burden of care and toil would be shared and lightened.

Madame Piérard was a good woman: during her married life she had become accustomed to yield un-

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questioning submission to a rather domineering and obstinate husband; but she was given to fret about little things, had a great many small manias of her own, and was, unfortunately, addicted to disagreeing with all her three sons-in-law. Madame André was fully aware of her mother's weak points, and did not fail to ask herself whether it would be possible for her to live amicably with Madame Derville, who was accustomed to reign supreme mistress of all around her. But the temptation was strong, and the prospect of giving her mother a home so alluring, that she banished all fears, and accepted, with genuine gratitude, Madame Derville's proposition.

"You are too good! too good!" she exclaimed; "but, if you think it possible, it will be a great joy for me. My mother could not assist us in the school,—in fact, she did not even teach us to read; but she has excellent sense, and is thoroughly capable of taking care of a large family. There were a great many of us at home, and my father had always several boarding-pupils besides." She hesitated. How could she suggest to Madame Derville that it would be best to relinquish altogether the duties of housekeeper to an entire stranger?

But Madame Derville gave her no time to propose it. "Very good," said she. "Now, if your mother will consent, I shall give up to her 'the keys,' that famous badge of authority of which Marie is so proud sometimes, when I intrust them to her for half an hour. Madame Piérard shall rule over Malvina; and the care of the little children, with all my other affairs, will give me sufficient occupation. It will be better for us all:

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I shall not over-work myself, and be worn out when night comes, and you will not be frightened by seeing me look as pale as a ghost." And she gave an affectionate kiss to Madame André, who bade her good-night with a heart full of love and gratitude.

As she seated herself before her writing-desk at the close of this weary, troubled day, she thought with astonishment of the readiness with which Madame Derville had devised a plan of relief for her mother, and of the pure unselfishness which had dictated the proposal. "Not a word or hint of the sacrifice she was willing to make in giving up to a stranger so much of her own authority! One might think my mother was about to render her a great service by coming to live under her roof. How can I ever be thankful enough to God for having given me such a mother-in-law!"

Madame Derville had also her reflections when she found herself alone for the night. "Poor child! what a comfort it will be to her to have her mother here! I hope she will prove as good and lovable as Jeanne; but, in any event, it is evidently the will of God that she should come. How could I have fully enjoyed the companionship of Jeanne and of her precious children had I willingly deprived them of that other grandmother, who has the same claim upon them as I?"

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CHAPTER XV.

"DO WHAT IS RIGHT, COME WHAT MAY."

MADAME DERVILLE had obeyed what seemed to her a divine command, without any thought of her own personal convenience. She had quieted Madame André's scruples by dwelling upon the freedom from care and from housework which would be afforded her by the arrival of Madame Piérard; but in her heart she was only half convinced of the truth of her own words, and was not a little doubtful of the entire success of the proposed arrangement. She found herself wondering whether the discipline necessary for the proper government of house and school could be maintained with so many mistresses; but she soon determined not to perplex her mind by anticipating troubles, and repeated again and again the maxim which had been the rule of her life: "Do what is right, come what may."

Marie was astounded when she heard of the expected arrival, and listened, with eyes and ears wide open, to all that was said about "Granny," as she immediately began to call Madame Piérard, in contradistinction to the other and better-known grandmother. "Will she take some of the classes in the school?" inquired Marie, eagerly. And, on being told that the "new grandmother" would occupy herself with kitchen and household cares, the little girl, without saying a word,

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crept to Madame Derville's side and kissed her tenderly.

Marie was extremely fond of power, and seemed born to rule, and she was, as yet, too young to have learned the lesson of submission and obedience in the school of life. And now, in her child's heart, there was a vague sense of uneasiness as to the future; she felt that she should not like to abdicate, as her grandmother was about to do, and to put the reins of government into other hands. Her mother read her feelings, and, while she could not help being proud of the child's discernment and sympathy, her own heart was heavy. How would this new scheme work in actual practice?

The critical moment was not far distant, for Madame Piérard had accepted with delight the invitation of her daughter Jeanne; and Eugénie's husband, much elated by the prospect of being rid of his mother-in-law, made his own approaching departure an excuse for hurrying her from his house. In a fortnight from the time when Madame Derville and Jeanne consulted together on the subject, Madame Brémont, always kind and neighborly, had lent her wagon and her gardener as driver, to go to meet Madame Piérard at the station.

It was a pleasant day in March; a few violets already peeped forth from the hedges, and the anemones raised their delicate heads beneath the shade of the great trees. Madame Brémont stood at her door, watching the wagon going slowly towards the town, carrying Madame André, who desired to meet her mother at the station.

"Ernestine has done a thing which—well, a thing that I would never have done," thought Cousin

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Eulalie. "Why need she have burdened herself with this Madame Piérard, of whom she knows nothing? There were her daughters, who should have taken care of her. Ah, to be sure! Jeanne is a daughter also, and she knew what it would be for her mother to be left alone. Yes, I see how it was; but I should not like to be in Ernestine's place. I must try, when they pass by, to catch a glimpse of this Madame Piérard's face."

Madame Brémont could not be induced to speak of the new-comer except as "*this* Madame Piérard," though her husband endeavored to arouse her sympathies in behalf of the poor woman who, after a long buffeting with the waves of life, was about to take shelter in the quiet haven of Brucourt.

In a single week after the new order of things was instituted at the Grange, Madame Derville said to herself, when reviewing, before she lay down to sleep, all the events, great and small, of the day, "Surely God does all things well!"

Madame André no longer looked anxious and perplexed; and Marie, though faithful to her ardent affection for "Grandmother," was respectful and loving in her manner towards "Granny." Madame Piérard exacted nothing more from the child; fatigued and worn out as she was by long years of care and vexation of spirit, she was more than willing to see every proof of affection lavished upon the kind friend who had so freely opened to her a comfortable home.

Madame Derville handed over to her the keys, and gave her full authority over certain departments, remaining sole mistress herself of the house and of those within it; not from a despotic nature, but because she

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was naturally the head of the establishment; and no one desired to question her right to the position.

Even Madame Brémont, exacting and suspicious as she sometimes was, acknowledged herself vanquished. "Ernestine did right," she said to her husband, who had often rebuked her for finding fault with his cousin; "Madame Piérard does not annoy her at all, and doubtless spares her much fatigue."

"Ernestine did her duty," said Monsieur Brémont; "she did unto another as she would have another do unto her, and God will reward and bless her." Her husband's simple piety and faith were often a reproach to Madame Brémont.

All went on smoothly at the Grange. Marie was merry and contented; Madame Derville always cheerful; and poor Madame Piérard so happy that she could not refrain from telling everybody of her happiness twenty times a day.

Madame André found in her mother's presence one source of satisfaction which she had not anticipated. Jean and "Granny" were entirely inseparable, and the child was always in her arms or upon her knee. The poor little fellow had once more a refuge from which no one could dislodge him; and his mother, who had grieved bitterly at being obliged to leave him so often while she was occupied in giving lessons, overlooking the pupils during study-hours, or accompanying them in their walks, was unspeakably glad that she was no longer forced to trust him to Malvina's tender mercies at such times. The girl was good-natured and kind, but she was overwhelmed with work, and took care of the child, after the fashion of the

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country, by fastening him into a little chair, "that he might not fall into the fire," she said. He was just beginning to walk, and now toddled after "Granny" all day long. When she stopped, he stopped, and then she was sure to take him up into her arms.

"Your mother attends to everything with Jean in her pocket," said Madame Derville; "his head is always upon her shoulder. Now, I never had any such talent."

Granny laughed. "Children never trouble me," said she; "I am unhappy only when there are none around me."

One could almost see Jean grow in these days; he was full of fun, and prattled away from morning till night; his little voice was to be heard everywhere. "Listen to Jean talking," the children would say, profiting by the interruption to talk a little themselves. Now that he was no longer confined to his nursery or to the kitchen, he had several little maids at his service during the hours of recreation. "It would take three or four Jeans to satisfy you!" said Madame Piérard, who often carried the poor child away to protect him from the affectionate disputes of his little worshipers; "indeed, you will kill him with kindness!"

There was one room, the school-room, into which Madame Piérard never entered, unless to see it swept, or to sweep it herself, when Malvina was too busy. She had a strange aversion to everything connected with education.

"I lived among lessons, and heard of nothing else, for many years of my life," said she; "but, happily, no scholars were ever given to me."

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"How unlucky," said Madame Derville, laughing, "that now, in your old age, you should have fallen into a boarding-school for little girls, after having been victimized for so long by a host of little boys!"

"Unlucky, indeed! How can you say so?" And Granny looked reproachfully at the speaker. "Why, I never had anything to do with the boys,—Monsieur Piérard took the whole charge of them; and as for these little girls, they give me no trouble whatever. I never even peep into their books, and it is delightful to see and hear them at their play; it makes the house so lively! If we had only Marie and Jean here, I should not hear so much laughing, from morning till night."

"Oh, Madame Piérard, there is no laughing during school-hours!"

"Mamma, you never hear any laughing in school!" exclaimed both the teachers at the same moment. And Granny ran away, laughing herself, like any child.

She trotted in and out of the kitchen; she visited the linen-press; she arranged all the drawers and cupboards in beautiful order: never was a boarding-school so thoroughly well managed as the Grange. All the mothers who lived near, and made frequent and unexpected visits to their daughters, "just to see how things were going on," were loud in their praises of the system and order which prevailed through the whole house. "And with only one servant!" said they, in surprise, not knowing that Madame Piérard's services were worth more than all that could be accomplished by two or three girls without judgment or experience.

Malvina, who had at first quite resented the arrival

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of the new-comer, ended by being altogether devoted to her. "She is always satisfied; or if she is not, she says nothing to me, but quietly does whatever I have forgotten," said the good girl, who rose at five in the morning, and went to bed at ten o'clock at night, without finding a single moment in which to sit down and rest.

"We cannot ask Malvina to do anything more," said Madame Derville, excusing herself to her daughter-in-law, who found her, feather broom in hand, busily engaged in dusting the parlor. "She never stops running, from the time she steps out of her bed until she lies down on it again!"

The little scholars were learning at the Grange the value of physical as well as of mental activity. More than one, accustomed to being constantly waited upon at home, discovered that it was possible to be a "lady, and even a *savante*," as they said, while sweeping a room, making one's bed, or mending one's linen. "I shall make women of them," said Madame Derville; and she knew that Madame Piérard rendered her valuable assistance in the good work.

With scarcely an exception, all of Madame André's pupils advanced rapidly in their studies, and she regarded with pardonable pride and triumph her success in this her own special department. She had inherited from her father the remarkable talent for teaching which had placed him in the very highest rank among the professors in Paris. The lessons amused and interested these country-children, who had never been accustomed to see any books in their homes, or to receive any instruction save the scanty teaching of the

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village school. Now, they listened with eagerness to the lectures on history, and almost quarreled, during play-hours, over the respective merits of their favorite kings and warriors; while such was the competition among the members of the composition-class, and so closely contested were the rewards, that Madame André was frequently obliged to call on Madame Derville to assist her in deciding who should be first.

Marie still remained in her grandmother's class, always at the head, but in no hurry to be promoted. "I love to stay with you," she said.

"Yes," replied Madame Derville, mischievously, "you like to be with me; and, besides, you are not quite sure whether you could keep up with Honorine and Céleste and Edmée."

Marie blushed. "I know that I should be behind them at first; but I shall catch up with them very soon when I go into mamma's class."

Her grandmother embraced her, but did not urge her to leave her present companions. "You would, however, learn much faster if taught by your mother," said she. "I am only good to teach the little ones."

As Marie was still among "the little ones," she made no audible protest; but she said to herself, "Grandmother is good for everything, and to everybody!" And the affectionate child was right.

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CHAPTER XVI.

AN EXCURSION.

AFTER Madame Piérard's arrival at the Grange relieved Madame Derville of so many household cares, the latter occasionally allowed herself to be persuaded to accompany the children on their great "Thursday walk." They often begged Granny also to join them, but she only laughed at the invitation.

"I have plenty of walking, my dears," she replied, "in the house and in the garden. Why, it must be at least fifty years since I went out to take a regular walk!"

"Oh, mamma!" interposed Madame André, "surely, when you were young, you and papa must have taken long walks together?"

A cloud passed over Granny's face. "Your father was always at his books," said she; "and, besides, his time was fully occupied, when not at the Lyceum, with his private pupils: we could not have lived without them. But we did take one walk, which I well remember. It was on a Sunday, the first day of May, and there were crowds of people abroad. I held my little Paul by the hand, until his father lifted him for a moment in his arms to look at some passing soldiers, and afterwards kept him at his side. It was a very warm day, and the child walked slowly, soon becoming

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heated and tired. My husband described to me, as we loitered along, the great fountains in the streets of Rome which he had seen; comparing them with those playing before us at the moment. I listened with interest; but suddenly I missed my little Paul! He was no longer at his father's side. We looked for him in vain, in the streets, on the bridge, on the quay. No one had noticed such a child, and we could gain no intelligence of him. I was almost crazy, as you may suppose. I ran hither and thither, crying and lamenting, and giving no attention to your father's words of consolation. He went, almost immediately, to give notice at the police-station that he had lost a child in the street; but I continued to wander about, scarcely knowing whither I went, until I strayed into the Tuileries Gardens. Your father had already run after, and stopped, three or four little boys, who he thought resembled Paul at a short distance. I stopped no one. I should have recognized my child in the dark if I had only heard him breathe! As I went blindly on, I ran against a statue (I think it was the figure of a river-god of the Rhone). I uttered a cry of pain, but it was succeeded by one of joy, as I discovered a little child, no other than my Paul, lying asleep at the foot of the statue. The poor child, worn out with fright and fatigue, and covered with dust, had cried himself to sleep. I took him in my arms, and carried him all the way home. And that is the only time I ever went out for a walk in all my life!"

The children listened, of course, with open-mouthed attention to Granny's story. "Have you an Uncle Paul, Marie?" inquired some of the curious ones.

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"No; he died when he was fifteen years old; but even when he was so young he had risen very high in all his studies, and every one said he would be a very distinguished man," answered Marie, who had heard very often of this young Uncle Paul.

"He studied too much: that was the reason he died," said Céleste, who ran no risk whatever of dying from overwork.

Although Madame Piérard was not to be persuaded into another long walk, the children gained Madame Derville's consent to join their party on a certain Thursday when a long-talked-of excursion was to be made. It was now the middle of June, and all promised well for a beautiful day, to the delight of the young pedestrians, who ran incessantly to the windows, taking observations of the sky, and predicting just such weather as they desired.

"The sea will be just right for us! What we need is to go at low tide, and to have the waves come in very slowly, wash a great many mussels and crabs into the holes of the rocks, and then give us time to get them out before more waves come up. What fun we shall have! Madame Derville says that we may take off our shoes and stockings!"

"We shall be where it is almost still water," said Honorine, whose father had been a sea-captain, and, after his marriage with one of the richest young women in the Cotentin, consoled himself for having no sons to make sailors of by instructing his daughter in marine lore and language; "but the rocks will be almost bare, and the tide will not come up very high."

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"So much the better! there will be no danger of the waves catching us."

And the whole party went to bed full of joyful anticipation of the morrow's pleasures.

The morning dawned, bright and beautiful. In order to have as long a day as possible, and to avoid the mid-day heat, preparations had been made to set out at a very early hour. Madame Piérard had cooked a huge piece of meat, notwithstanding Malvina's protestations against so large a provision. "They will dine on their mussels and crabs," said she.

"No, no! those are to be brought home for supper; each of the children has promised me a share of her spoils. But, alas! I cannot endure mussels. I knew a gentleman in Paris who was poisoned by them."

"Did he die?" asked Malvina.

"No; but he was very ill. Mussels are very unwholesome creatures."

"Well, so they may be, in Paris," said Malvina, scouring away at her saucepans; "but here, and at Verville, where I was born, no one ever thought them hurtful; and, Heaven knows, we ate enough of them! When we children had had only bread and beans for a fortnight, my mother used to give us a treat of mussels. For six cents she bought enough to feed every child well; and there were ten of us at home."

Madame Piérard shook her head. "If I can bring myself to swallow one, just to please the children, it will be all that I can do."

The donkey was brought out, and a great hamper was fastened on either side his saddle, the children

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dancing round the patient animal. "There is such a dinner as is not often seen at Verville," said Malvina, who was tying a basket of cherries to one of the hampers which held the meat and other provisions. The second hamper contained changes of shoes and stockings, and warm wraps for the whole party in case of need.

"How can we wet our shoes and stockings when we are playing with bare feet?" exclaimed the children, laughing.

"You might perhaps wet them before you were quite ready to go into the water," said Madame André; "a single moment would suffice for it."

"The shoes and stockings are packed, and are to be taken," said Madame Derville; "it is unnecessary to discuss the matter."

No one replied; and the children proceeded to take leave of Jean, stifling him with kisses, as he stretched out his arms, begging to go also; he knew that the hats and umbrellas betokened a journey of some kind. His little worshipers would have been only too happy to put him into the great hamper instead of the shoes; but it had been decreed that he was to remain with Granny, who held him in her arms at the door, watching the party so long as a single form remained in sight.

"There is Jeanne in front, with the large girls; she looks as happy as they. Madame Derville cannot walk so fast; Marie is by her side, as usual. How the child loves her grandmother! and she has good cause; God bless her!" And as Madame Piérard stood watching, shading her eyes from the glitter of the sun upon the waves, until the whole party had disappeared, she

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thanked God in her heart for having found her a shelter under this hospitable roof, and turned back into the house.

Malvina met her, and interrupted her reflections. "Where shall we begin the cleaning?" asked she; for Granny had decided to avail herself of the absence of the walking-party and to have what she called a grand "turning out."

"Ah! I am good for something yet!" said the brisk old woman. "I think we had best go first into the school-room. It will be almost a day's work to take out all the ink-spots from the floor and furniture."

And the two allies set vigorously to work; Jean trotting about the room meanwhile, amusing himself, and making many hair-breadth escapes from falling into or upsetting the pails of hot water.

The walking-party was also at work; but the water was "not hot," said some of the most venturesome, who had already put the tips of their feet into the little rivulets that flowed round the rocks. They climbed, and slipped, and laughed at every fall. It was by no means easy to detach the mussels from the great stones, covered with sea-weed, to which they clung. Sometimes the young fisherwomen would discover a rock overhanging the shore and covered entirely with the coveted shell-fish. Then a cautious advance was made; one's steps were planted deliberately and softly upon the intervening stones; the desired position was gained, the old knife opened, and the prize almost secured, when, in the very moment of success, the treacherous stepping-stone more than once tottered and turned completely round, upsetting the young

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adventurer upon the wet sand. With hands and face scratched, she retired from the field, to see a more lucky rival advance and become possessor of the mussels so eagerly sought for. Each child carried a little bag, hanging from her belt; and to fill her bag was the end and aim of each one's ambition. Madame Derville was fully occupied in settling disputes as to property, in consoling the wounded, and in bringing smiles to the faces of the unsuccessful and melancholy members of her party.

No one entered more thoroughly into the sport, and no one was more skillful, than Madame André; she was constantly passing a handful of the mussels or crabs into the half-empty bags of the very little girls, or of the lazy and awkward ones, and these all kept close to her during the day.

Grandmother did not run from rock to rock; she took her station upon a large stone, nearly dry, which afforded her a comfortable seat after she had carefully dislodged a family of little crabs from the cracks. Here she remained, watching over her flock, all of whom she could keep within sight from her elevated position. Soon she observed Céleste and Marie stooping down at the foot of a rock; but, instead of securing the mussels with which it was covered, they were busily engaged in conversation with a third party, invisible to Madame Derville. Her curiosity was aroused, and, descending with some difficulty from her high seat, she moved noiselessly towards the little girls, her steps making no sound upon the damp sand.

They were too entirely engrossed to notice her, even when she came close beside them. Marie had taken

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out her pocket-handkerchief, and was about to bind it upon the arm of a little boy, ten or eleven years old, who had evidently hurt himself badly; the skin was rubbed off the arm, and the blood was falling in large drops. Marie resolutely bathed the wound with sea-water, though the boy cried pitifully from the pain; the tears streamed over his sunburnt face, brown with dirt and dust. A half-filled basket lay at his feet, and he exclaimed, between his sobs,—

"That is all I have gathered; and my mother said if I did not bring home the basket filled, and the bag also,"—showing to the children a great bag folded in two, hanging over his shoulder,—"there would be nothing at all for supper! And so there will be nothing; for I have hurt my arm so badly that I cannot climb high, and the little ladies have gathered all the mussels that I could have reached. I had no dinner; we had nothing in the house to eat; and now I shall have no supper either!" The dismal prospect of going hungry to bed overcame him, and his tears flowed faster than before.

Marie seized his basket. "I am quite sure of a dinner," said she, "for we have an immense piece of beef in the hamper, with plenty of bread and cherries besides. So I can do very well without supper, and you shall have all the mussels I have gathered." And in an instant she emptied her bag into his basket, filling it almost to the top.

Céleste said nothing, but looked at Marie, at the basket, and at the little boy. Madame Piérard had said jestingly what the mother of Tranquille had told him sadly and seriously: "If you do not bring home

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mussels, there will be nothing for supper." Céleste reflected that dinner would have been over a long time when they returned to the Grange, that she should be very hungry, and that if she carried home no mussels perhaps she should really have no supper. "Never mind," said she, almost aloud; "there will at least be plenty of bread." And she quickly followed Marie's example. This time the basket was more than full, and the little fisherman, much comforted, even opened his bag, into which several handfuls of mussels fell and were lost in its depths.

Madame Derville had stood all this time a little apart from the children, and unperceived by them. Now she asked, "Why does not your mother come and help you? and what does your father do?"

Tranquille started, and pulled off his brown woolen cap. Marie took possession of her grandmother's hand, but made no attempt to enlighten her as to "the situation," feeling perfectly confident that all would now be right. "Grandmother always finds out everything," she said to herself.

Céleste, however, greatly pleased with her own generosity and proud of her act of self-denial, was more talkative than usual. "He has had no dinner; he has hurt his arm; and he will get no supper unless he carries home his bag and basket full. I have given him *all* my mussels,—every one that I gathered,—and I hope Madame Piérard will give me something in their place for my supper," insinuated the cunning little Normandy girl, as she finished her speech.

Madame Derville paid little attention to Céleste; but, looking with her piercing eye full into the boy's face,

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she repeated her question: "Why does not your mother come to help you gather fish?"

He began to laugh, while his eyes were yet wet with tears. "It would not be very easy," he replied, "for my mother to come to the shore just now. I have a little brother, born only yesterday, and the priest has not baptized him yet; and my two little sisters are ill, in bed with him and my mother; that is the reason we had no dinner."

"And your father?" pursued Madame Derville.

"My father was drowned at sea six months ago; his boat capsized; and now we have no father and no nets!" said Tranquille, weeping bitterly.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A GOOD WORK.

TRANQUILLE was not left to weep alone; Céleste had quite forgotten the possibility of a supper consisting only of dry bread, and, as she stood listening with profound compassion to the boy's sad recital, her eyes also overflowed with sympathetic tears. Marie, however, did not stop to weep; she cast one appealing glance at her grandmother, as if to bespeak from her that care and protection for the sufferers which was never withheld by the kind old lady. Then, dropping her hand, Marie bounded away towards a large rock which rose not far from where the little group stood. It was steep and slippery, but was well covered with very large mussels. The imperative necessity of doing something to relieve the misery which had just been described to her, lent wings to the active child, and she climbed rapidly, pulling herself along with hands and knees, to the first level surface of the rock; but just as she was about to begin the work of detaching the mussels from their stony bed, she heard a cry from below.

Céleste, animated by a charitable zeal, desired to join in the enterprise. "There are plenty of mussels up there for two to gather," she thought; but the

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way was slippery and difficult, and she soon cried out, "Help me, Marie! help me!"

Marie found it hard enough to keep her own footing; twice, at the very moment when she was about to slide her knife under an obstinate mussel, her feet slipped, and nothing saved her but sitting flat as quickly as possible. How, then, was she to help her friend without a risk of falling with her to the shore below? She must make an effort, however, for there was Céleste half-way up the rock, breathless, and unable to move backward or forward. Madame Derville was engaged in earnest conversation with Tranquille, and could not, in any event, help the little climbers. Marie crouched down, holding to the lowest point of the rock with one hand, and stretched out the other to Céleste. But the latter was stout and large, and very heavy, notwithstanding all the exercise she had taken since her arrival at the Grange; and she threw herself with so much weight upon her companion's hand, that Marie felt herself dragged from her hold upon the jutting point which she had grasped for safety. She could do no more, and nothing remained for them both but to roll helplessly down to the beach, where they could not fail to be hurt by the rough sand and pebbles. But suddenly a new idea flashed across Marie's mind. "Let go my hand!" she cried, hurriedly, to Céleste; but the frightened child only grasped it more tightly. "Let me go!" repeated Marie; "I will hold with both hands to the point of the rock, and then stretch out my leg; you must take hold of it, and I will sit down and try to draw you up in that way."

Marie's plan was a brilliant one, and in a few mo-

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ments Céleste was safely seated by her side. "It is well," thought Marie, "that mamma made me put on this old gray woolen petticoat over my dress; I know it must be almost ruined by these green stains!"

The children now worked vigorously, and the mussels fairly rained into their little bags. Marie ventured to climb still higher, to the second platform on the rock, and throw down her treasures upon the sand, to await her descent. "We have almost enough now," said she, "to fill Tranquille's great bag."

But Céleste shook her head; she could calculate better than Marie. "We have not nearly enough; but perhaps the others will come and help us."

"They will not all come, I am sure," said Marie, who was not desirous to share the glory of her benevolent enterprise with her companions; "some of the girls are very fond of mussels, and would rather have them for supper than give them to Tranquille."

The prospect was far from pleasant to Céleste. "I like them also, very much," she murmured, in a low voice; but she counted on Madame Piérard's good offices, and went on cheerfully with her work.

At length they concluded to return to the spot where they had left Madame Derville and Tranquille, but both had disappeared. Marie, always quick-witted, exclaimed, "Grandmother has gone with him to see his mother! I am sure of it! There are some houses quite near here; let us go and try if we can find her. Then Tranquille will show us his little brother, and I can see if he is as large as Jean was the day he was born."

She was already leading Céleste away, when the latter stopped, and held Marie back with all her strength

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from taking another step. "Look here!" she exclaimed, in a frightened voice, and with staring eyes; "there is something written on the sand, close to that stick which is sticking in the cleft of the rock!"

Marie threw herself on the ground to read the mysterious words; but, as she was not short-sighted, the nearer she approached the more confused did the writing appear. Finally, Céleste deciphered the following words: "I shall soon return: wait for me." "That means," said Céleste, "that we are not to go to find her."

Marie did not think so; she was anxious to make a voyage of discovery, and her explanation of her grandmother's very simple direction differed entirely from that of Céleste. "It means that we are not to be uneasy about her; but of course she would not object to our following her."

"We do not know where she is."

"No; but we shall find her footsteps in the sand. It is much more easy to follow a person on the sand than in the forest; though the Indians can track their enemies for miles and miles in the woods; you remember mamma told us about it the other day."

"But Madame Derville is not your enemy!" said Céleste, who could not understand the drift of her companion's talk.

Marie deigned no reply, but began to search for footprints in the sand. The whole party had passed this way, however, just when the tide commenced to flow out, and the tracks of the donkey's hoofs, the little children's feet, and those of the two ladies, were mingled in utter confusion. Marie shook her head

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despairingly. "I see no way of finding out where she is gone!"

No way by which to be disobedient! What a pity! Céleste emptied her bag at the foot of the rock, and recommenced her task of detaching the mussels from their stony lodging-places. Marie followed her example, and the heap grew larger and larger. They both worked with an eagerness which was natural to Marie, but surprising in a child of Céleste's lethargic temperament; she was animated, for almost the first time in her life, by a sentiment of genuine charity.

"We have gathered half enough, at least, to fill Tranquille's bag when he returns," said Marie, hopefully; and this time she was right.

Tranquille reappeared in a short time; he was alone, but he carried his basket and bag, both empty. He had indeed escorted Madame Derville to his home; and while she conversed with his mother he deposited his booty in the chimney-corner. Presently, Madame Derville desired him to return to his work upon the shore. "I think you will find that my little girls have worked hard for you during your absence," said she. And the boy ran away in a transport of delight.

Céleste was not much pleased at the reappearance of the empty basket and bag. She threw herself down upon the sand, saying, in a tone of vexation, "We have only enough to fill the basket once more! there is nothing to put into the bag, and I am *so* tired!"

Marie assumed the management of affairs, with a responsible and dignified air. "We must call all the other children," said she; "we must look for them; and when we tell them that Tranquille's mother is ill,

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they will all help us, and afterwards we shall have our dinner."

She banished now all thought of reserving to herself the glory and satisfaction of the great undertaking. She needed assistance, and she must ask for it; afterwards, it would be very pleasant to think of rest and dinner. Could she have accomplished the task alone, she would willingly have worked until nightfall, without stopping to eat or to rest; but now self-love must be set aside, and she proceeded at once to summon her recruits. "Mamma! mamma! where are you?" she shouted, at the top of her voice.

Madame André had already gathered her little troop together. "Let us go and find my mother," she said; "you have plenty of crabs and mussels, and it is nearly time for dinner. Those who are not quite satisfied will have still a few moments in which to fish, while we are preparing to set out for the Grange." She looked at her watch, and added, quickly, "The tide will soon begin to rise, and we have no time to waste." And she took the hands of two quite small girls, who were rather weak and rather lazy. They were the daughters of the collector in Brucourt. Entering into the day's sport with much less activity than the other children, each had in her bag only about twenty mussels; but they lagged wearily along, as if oppressed by a weighty load, and Madame André said to herself, "When we come to the rocks, I shall probably have to carry these children on my back!"

Marie heard the voices of the advancing party, and decided at once upon her course of action. Céleste was a little in the background, engaged in a determined

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struggle with an obstinate mussel. "Mamma," exclaimed Marie, "we found a little boy here gathering mussels, like ourselves; but he has hurt his arm, and it has bled a great deal. He is very unhappy, and so is his mother, for the father is dead. And he has a little brother, born only yesterday; and his two little sisters are ill; and he has had no dinner, neither will he or the other children have any supper unless he carries home plenty of mussels; and he has hurt his arm, as I told you, and grandmother has gone to see his mother, and the bag is so very large——"

Marie was forced to pause, for want of breath, and Céleste took up the narrative, continuing, in a more quiet manner: "We gave the boy all our mussels, because we can do without them for supper; and we have filled his basket twice; but the bag is so very large that we could not fill it by ourselves."

"Now, who will help us?" cried Marie, having recovered her breath.

At the same moment Céleste displayed the famous bag, which she had taken from the hands of Tranquille. He hid himself behind her, abashed by the unusual sight of so many strange faces; visitors were few and far between upon that solitary shore.

There was a moment's hesitation among Marie's little audience; they had all counted on a supper of mussels when they should return to the Grange; and then they had promised to carry home a bountiful supply for Madame Piérard and Malvina. A promise is a promise, and their ideas of right and wrong were sadly confused by Marie's proposition. At length Honorine, the tallest, strongest, and most active of the group,

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stepped forward; she had been eminently successful during the day, and her bag was more nearly full than those of her companions. She emptied it deliberately into Tranquille's great sack. The example was contagious: in quick succession every other bag was emptied into the large one, except that belonging to little Artémise, the notary's daughter; she positively declined to relinquish her spoils, saying, "They are my own mussels! I gathered them for my own supper!"

"You are quite free, my dear, to dispose of them as you choose," said Madame André, who had begun to untie the string of the little girl's bag; but a murmur of dissatisfaction and contempt arose from the other children.

"Miser! Glutton!" said one to another, in undertones.

But for Madame André's restraining presence, Artémise would have fared badly; as it was, no one dared to express her thoughts audibly; but Honorine, the eldest scholar, and the head of the first class, exclaimed, threateningly, "We shall remember her!"

Madame André overheard these few words, and resolved to watch over Artémise; she could not help being displeased at the child's selfishness, but she would not suffer her to be persecuted. "The boy would not gain much should I oblige Artémise to join in her companion's gift, and it might do more harm than good. But I will order her to eat all her mussels alone this evening, and she will be shamed into repentance."

Tranquille's bag was now so full that, on placing it upright on the sand, he found himself quite unable to lift it. "It was never so heavy before," said he.

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Madame André and Honorine succeeded in putting it upon his shoulders, and he walked away slowly, bending beneath its great weight. "We shall all have a good supper to-night," was his parting salutation to his kind little helpers. Marie was charmed, and fairly danced for joy, to the great peril of the basket of provisions, which she and Céleste now carried between them.

"I hope," said Honorine, gravely, "they will not give a supper of mussels to the one-day-old baby!" which sage remark called forth a peal of laughter from the merry party as they stood watching Tranquille making his way patiently towards his home.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VISIT.

MEANWHILE, Madame Derville was seated in the house of the poor widow,—resting, and talking with her; listening to the sad story of her troubles, and consoling her with words of piety. Then the good grandmother took into her arms the poor little baby, who had been wrapped up in an old petticoat and laid by one of the neighbors in the mother's bed, by the side of the two little girls already tossing and burning with fever. Madame Derville bade Tranquille light the fire: fortunately, the poor people in that country are usually well supplied with fuel; they heap up dry branches and the dead wood from the hedges; while those who live near the sea gather a plentiful store of stray planks and fragments of wrecks, washed in by the tide. A blazing fire was soon built upon the hearth, and the smoke poured out through every crevice in the roof and walls of the cottage,—no one seeming to heed it. Madame Derville found an old brown earthenware pot, and desired Tranquille to fill it with water before he returned to his mussel-gathering; when this was heated, she proceeded to give to mother and children the unaccustomed refreshment of a gentle and thorough washing. She arranged the tangled hair of the poor

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woman, and was about trying to make the miserable bed more neat and comfortable, when Tranquille's returning footsteps sounded upon the pebbles outside the door. His load was so heavy that he stumbled over the door-sill and almost fell.

"Ah, my children have indeed worked well!" said Madame Derville, with satisfaction; and she stepped forward to relieve him of his burden; but the briny odor of the mussels overpowered her. "What shall you do with that great heap of mussels?" asked she.

The boy looked at her in amazement. "I shall sell the bagful to-morrow in the market; and I am going now to take the basket to Colette, that I may be able to get some bread for supper."

"And do you expect to leave the bag, and that other heap, lying in this room until to-morrow?" asked Madame Derville, shocked at the idea.

"To be sure, madame; if I should put them out-of-doors, they would all be stolen in the night by the idle boys who will not work for themselves."

Madame Derville looked around her; the wretched hut, built of wood and clay, with no other foundation than some of the stones from the beach, stood alone under the shelter of a great rock and at the foot of the cliff, and was at some distance from the little fishing-hamlet; but there was not a shed, not a hole of any kind outside, in which the precious shell-fish could be stored. There was no alternative but to let the unsavory heap remain in the cottage, though the foul smell arising from it during the night must, of necessity, aggravate the fever of the poor little girls and increase the discomfort of the mother. Madame Der-

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ville sighed heavily. "I have dared sometimes to call *myself* poor!" said she. "God forgive me! what is my poverty, compared to this?"

Neither Tranquille nor his mother comprehended in the least degree the questions and the evident uneasiness of their kind visitor. The mother raised herself, and sat upon the edge of the bed, viewing with delight and gratitude the heap of mussels, in which she saw a prospective supper and breakfast, while the boy, standing before her, related the story of his prize.

"I gathered very few myself," said he; "not more than one basketful, because my arm was so badly hurt. The little ladies did all the work. There was one in particular who was kindest of all. She bathed my arm, and tied her handkerchief round it. I think they called her Marie. She it was who persuaded the other little ladies to help me; but for her we should have no supper."

Tranquille dwelt long upon this agreeable thought, and would have repeated his story again and again, but Madame Derville interrupted him. "I cannot stay any longer," said she; "but I will return to-morrow. Do you think you can buy a pound of meat from Colette?"

"Yes, madame, she will have it, for to-morrow is market-day, and she always lays in her provisions the night before; but I shall not be able to buy anything more than some loaves of bread with the mussels I have in the basket here." And he lifted his basket with the air of one thoroughly acquainted with his business.

"Here is money to pay for the meat," said Madame Derville, taking twenty sous from her purse; "and

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you must bring also three or four parsnips and leeks, to make some soup. Have you no garden?" And she looked out on the narrow strip of sand that surrounded the cottage, separating it from the bed of stones which lay about it in a larger circle.

"Nothing will grow here," said Tranquille, who had never dreamed of even trying to make a garden; "but I shall find the vegetables at Colette's, or elsewhere, and I will soon have the soup boiling."

Madame Derville shook her head. If she had not been so pressed for time, feeling that her duties at home called her thither, she would have greatly preferred to remain in the cottage, to superintend in person the making of the soup, give the poor mother a good supper, and see Tranquille enjoying a slice of beef; but it was necessary for her to take her departure. She gave minute and distinct directions to Tranquille, who listened understandingly and promised to do his best. The sick woman, feeble and exhausted, had sunk back upon her pillows, which Madame Derville had arranged as comfortably as possible, and had fallen into a doze.

Tranquille took up his basket of mussels and prepared to leave the cottage. "I shall come back as quickly as I can," said he, "with the bread and meat and vegetables."

"Remember to put some cabbage-leaves into the bottom of your basket, after you shall have sold the mussels," said Madame Derville to the boy as he went away.

"What droll ideas these rich people have in their heads!" thought Tranquille. "What harm can the

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mussels do to my basket? But no matter; it was a lucky chance that I hurt my arm to-day; we shall have a real feast to-night to pay for my wounds!" And he quickened his steps as he thought of the coming supper.

Madame Derville also walked quickly. She was alarmed, on looking at her watch, to find the hour so late; and she knew not where to seek for her party. But as she turned a bend in the cliff which sheltered the poor woman's cottage, she heard merry voices and shouts of laughter, and a little farther on she came upon the dining-party. They had spread their repast on a bed of smooth sand, between several great rocks, which formed a sort of amphitheatre, and were seated round the table, or rather the cloth, enjoying their meal to the uttermost. They ate and laughed and talked, Madame André laughing with them.

Madame Derville looked at her with genuine satisfaction, as she approached the group. "Jeanne is completely transformed since she received André's letter approving of our new undertaking. (I should have liked to see him disapprove of it.) Jeanne is quite another person. Before the arrival of these last letters, she seemed to live in dread of his opinion; as if I did not *know* what my son would say!" And the good mother drew herself up involuntarily as she slowly and quietly approached the festive party. The rocks which formed their dining-room concealed her approach from them, though she had been able to see them at some distance beyond.

Just as she was about presenting herself before them, she heard Marie say, "If grandmother does not come

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very soon, I am going to look for her. She has eaten nothing since morning; and indeed I am not sure that she even took any breakfast, for she was so busy running about to see whether Malvina was ready, whether the baskets were packed, and whether old Lucas had brought the donkey. She will be ill from hunger, and will not know what is the matter with her."

"You are right, Marie; but stay where you are, and I will go and search for grandmother," said Madame André, quite terrified by Marie's melancholy picture of her grandmother's probable sufferings.

She rose hastily; but at the same moment Madame Derville came forward from behind the rocks. She was greatly fatigued, and her appearance almost justified Marie's fears; but she walked up to the little girl's side, saying, laughingly, "So you play the spy upon your grandmother! you watch when she eats and when she does not eat, and you have the audacity to say that she herself knows nothing! Well, well! give me a piece of bread; for I believe I am really very hungry." And as she spoke she leaned wearily against a rock behind her.

The children looked distressed, and ceased to eat. Madame Piérard had put a bottle of wine into the basket, which had not been touched; the cork was now drawn, in spite of Madame Derville's protest, and she was compelled to drink a glass of it, while Honorine brought to her, spread upon a fresh white napkin, the portion of dinner which had been carefully set aside for her. The old lady's strength seemed to return after having eaten, and taken another glass of wine, and she

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rose, saying it was quite time to set out on the homeward walk; but her limbs refused to carry her.

"Do not try to walk, grandmother!" cried Marie.

"Pray sit still, dear Madame!" said the other children.

"And how, then, am I to reach home? We do not desire to spend the night here on the shore."

As Madame Derville spoke, her daughter in-law, who had, with Honorine, disappeared for a few moments, came back, leading the donkey, which had been tied to a low bush at some distance during dinner-time. "Here are your legs, my mother," said Madame André, with decision.

"Yes, grandmother!" cried Marie, delighted; "here are four legs for you!"

Madame Derville protested, but in vain; the whole party refused to listen. Even the very little girls declared that they were not at all tired, and that nothing should induce them to mount the donkey.

The shawls were soon arranged so as to make a comfortable seat upon the old saddle, and the two empty baskets were put behind Madame Derville after she was placed upon the improvised cushion. She was still very pale; and Marie, who led the donkey by the bridle, looked back constantly, to assure herself that her "darling grandmother" was not really ill.

The party walked slowly towards the Grange. Tranquille, seated upon a stool before the blazing fire in the little cottage, gravely watched and skimmed the soup.

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CHAPTER XIX.

CONSEQUENCES.

TRANQUILLE was right in calling it a lucky wound that had drawn the attention of Madame Derville and her scholars to the needs of his family.

Brucourt was quite a rich town. Several of the inhabitants were large property-holders; everybody worked, and there was plenty of work for all. The few old people who were left without families were cared for by so many in the town that their old age was more comfortable and luxurious than the days of their youth and strength had been. Madame Derville had often regretted the poor whom she used to visit and relieve while she lived at La Mivoie, and to whom her presence had always brought aid and pleasure. "I should like to accustom these children to such visits," she often said, after her arrival at the Grange; "but here there are none who need our services." She had not yet made the excursion to Verville.

The little fishing-hamlet had grown up gradually, being peopled by those who had been driven by poverty, unhappiness, or ill conduct from the prosperous villages of the Cotentin. They had wasted or sold their little property, and no one would employ them in farm or house-work; men who beat their wives; women who sent their children out daily to beg, lie, and steal.

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These poor creatures had come, one family after another, to settle in this wild, desolate spot by the sea; they built for themselves wretched little huts, and lived scantily and miserably upon mussels and other shellfish, eating and also selling them to the peasants of the surrounding country. By the people of the town the fishermen were heartily despised; but they were also feared. They were deceitful and violent, stealing whenever the occasion offered, and giving a blow without hesitation. In the neighborhood they were known as "*les Maréyeux*," "sellers of salt fish." The young men were, for the most part, tall and handsome; but no farmer's daughter would dream of marrying one of them. No favorable distinctions were made by the more prosperous inhabitants of the town. "They are all alike,—all thieves and idlers," was the unanimous verdict.

Madame Derville had a vague idea that the fisher-people were held in very low estimation in the town; but at the time when she returned to Brucourt their condition was better than in her youth. The present generation was certainly less corrupt than the one before it, because they had now fixed homes and a regular means of livelihood. The women still gathered mussels and crabs; but a few boats had been built on the shore, and the men went a short distance out to sea, bringing in loads of fish, for which they always found a ready sale. On Sundays, when the nets were spread out to dry and the boats drawn up on the sand, the little cabins did not look so badly as of old, and one might almost believe that brighter days were in store for their poor inhabitants. Among them, how-

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ever, as is often the case in a population composed entirely of working-people, there was little or no provision made for the future. In all the houses a degree of disorder and laziness prevailed, which greatly aggravated the sufferings of the inmates when sickness entered. Sometimes the father was dead or had abandoned his family; then, when the mother was taken ill, want and misery fell upon all. No money laid up, no little hoard from which to provide medicine or food. While the fishing was successful, money flowed in freely, and was as freely spent. The boys went out in the boats, learning to fish, but ignorant of everything else; the girls mended the nets and gathered mussels on the rocks. The church was far off; and had it been nearer, they would have been ashamed to appear in their shabby clothes; and there was no school of any kind. Still, the people of Verville lived and flourished. The houses were full of sturdy children, with sunburnt faces and flaxen hair. Those who were born delicate or unhealthy seldom lived long; the rough discipline to which they were necessarily subjected was too severe for such fragile plants.

Six months before Madame Derville's visit to the hamlet, all was happiness and mirth in Tranquille's home. The father was then living; but after he perished at sea, all the efforts made by the boy and his mother proved ineffectual. Things went from bad to worse; Tranquille became less docile and obedient than formerly, and the poor mother, who had come from a neighboring village, where her house had been destroyed by an incendiary fire, lost all hope and courage. She received into her arms, almost with

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despair, the little babe whom its father was never to see; but in that very moment Heaven was sending her succor and consolation.

Madame Derville was as persevering as she was charitable. She had an earnest desire to enlist the children under her charge in works of benevolence and self-denial; but, knowing how unaccustomed they had all been to the sight of poverty and suffering, she did not try to force them into assisting the poor family now brought under their notice. Marie alone took the matter seriously to heart; but very soon the meeting with Tranquille, the labor, and the little act of self-sacrifice in which all had shared, produced the desired effect, and each child expressed sincere sympathy and interest.

Artémise was obliged, according to Madame André's determination, to eat her own mussels in full view of her companions, who supped merrily upon bread and lettuce; but before she had finished, she pushed aside her plate in shame and confusion, and, a few days after, she was the first to give up, voluntarily, half of the recreation-hour, in order to sew on the clothes which were being prepared for the newly-born baby. Several of the children, who were well supplied with pocket-money, bought calico and printed cottons; Céleste, who had spent the whole of her allowance, wrote to her grandmother:—

"DEAR GRANNY,—I have something to tell you. The other day we all went for a walk to the sea; we can look at it from the windows of the Grange, but on this day we walked quite to the shore, at Verville. On

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the beach we found a poor little boy, who had hurt his hand, and he had nothing to eat. Marie and I gave him all the mussels we had gathered, and then we worked very hard to gather more for him; so hard that the skin was rubbed off my hands, and my feet were very wet; but it did me no harm. So the boy and his mother both had a good supper. The boy has two little sisters, and a little brother just born. They have no father, because he was drowned. The poor little baby must have some clothes, and everybody has given money to help buy them; but I have no money. I spent it for candies. Pray send me a little purse full, granny dear. I have already made a cap for the baby, out of an old muslin sleeve which Madame gave me; but I wish to send something better. Give my love to mamma and to papa. When shall you come to see me? CÉLESTE."

"When shall we go to see her? We will go at once," said Madame Evrard.

Her daughter had nothing to do at home. The great herds of cattle grazed peacefully in the pastures; there were plenty of servants in the house: so in a short time the horse was harnessed, and the two ladies set out for Brucourt. The grandmother took with her not only a bountiful supply of small coins, but also a large bundle of old clothes, to be given to Tranquille and his sisters. And this was not all: a great basket, filled with butter, eggs, cheese, and fruit, was securely tied into the bottom of the tilted cart which conveyed the ladies, while two fat chickens looked out between the bars of a coop.

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"People will think we are going to sell our goods in market!" said Céleste's mother, in a tone of vexation.

"Well, I have often done that before," replied Madame Evrard, placidly, as two strong serving-women hoisted her, with great difficulty, into her seat. "But in those days it was not so hard for me to move about as it is now! Oh!" And she settled herself in her chair with a sigh, took the reins, and drove away.

The arrival of the cart at the Grange was hailed with shouts of joy. When the first greetings were over, the unpacking took place, and Céleste had the pleasure of presenting to Madame Derville the stock of eatables brought by her grandmother. They were received with due thanks; but the two mistresses, as well as the scholars, were even more pleased and grateful when the bundle of clothing was displayed. The garments had belonged respectively to the father, mother, and grandmother of Céleste, and were so large and so substantial that they afforded ample material to provide a wardrobe for every member of the poor family for whom they were destined.

"We can put the little baby into one of the sleeves of your father's great-coat," said Honorine, lifting up an immense coat made of cloth and lined throughout with flannel; "and he will be well clothed from head to foot."

"We can make it into a coat and vest and pantaloons for Tranquille! Grandmother says she can easily cut them all out!" cried Marie, dancing merrily around the heap of clothing, which had been piled upon the table in the dining-room, and covered it so

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completely that Malvina could hardly find a corner for her tray of refreshments.

The contributions of Madame Evrard and her daughter proved more than sufficient to clothe the poor widow and her four children in decent and comfortable garments. But the changes in the little cottage soon drew upon her the attention and the envy of her neighbors. On Thursdays, when Madame Derville often visited her, accompanied by Marie, Céleste, or Honorine, a troop of half-naked children would emerge from the surrounding cabins; one would cry out, "Oh, if I had only a petticoat!" Another would say, "And I, a coat!" "And I, a frock!" "And I, a chemise!" would echo from a chorus of little voices, while the crowd of beggars followed closely on Madame Derville's steps. She never gave them money, but promised them clothes; and to supply their wants, her pupils levied contributions on the wardrobes of all their relatives and friends. The hours of recreation were devoted to mending and making over these garments; and the little people on the shore were, by degrees, well furnished with frocks, coats, and petticoats.

"While you are at home during the holidays, you must not forget to collect more things for our poor children," said Marie to her companions.

"And we shall work also," replied some of the zealous ones.

"I have a set of baby-clothes, all cut out," said Céleste.

"And I," said Honorine, "shall make six shirts."

"It is not to be expected that we shall work during our holidays!" protested a few indolent girls.

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The discussions on the subject waxed so warm sometimes that it became necessary for Madame André to interfere.

The weather grew very hot, and the atmosphere was heavy and stifling. One rose in the morning feeling unrefreshed, and everybody complained of headache. Day after day a violent storm was predicted; but no storm came.

Madame Derville continued her visits to Verville; but on several occasions she was forced to borrow the donkey from old Lucas, and she persistently refused to allow any one to accompany her. "The heat is too intense; the children must not take long walks in such weather," she said; but her own zeal did not abate for one moment. She was oppressed by the misery, ignorance, and wrong-doing which she encountered in the little hamlet, and felt as if she could not do enough to remedy the evils. There was not a house in which she was not known; not a mother who failed to salute her respectfully; not a child who did not run after her. Even the men, when they were on shore, and chanced not to be in the tavern, accorded to her a nod of the head as she passed.

"It is fortunate, my mother," said Madame André, sometimes, "that you are too busy at home to escape from us altogether, otherwise I fear you would wish to take up your abode at Verville."

"You see what it is to have Madame Piérard here," replied the grandmother; "without her I should never be able to set my foot outside the house."

Granny laughed, but said nothing; she was as timid and retiring as her daughter; but her heart overflowed

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with gratitude; time had only increased her respect and affection for Madame Derville.

At last the evening before vacation arrived; the small but highly-valued prizes were distributed,—the children having, with one accord, given up the books which they were to have received, preferring to bestow their value in money upon the mother of Tranquille, to assist in repairing her cottage.

Everything was packed away: lesson-books, copy-books, and work. Nothing was heard but laughing and merriment, while endless promises and confidences were exchanged among the little friends. The windows were all thrown wide open, to admit the faintest breeze that might be wafted in from the sea; for the weather was still intensely hot. It was six o'clock in the evening; early the next morning all the pupils were to depart, and the house would be almost empty.

Madame Derville had gone to Verville, to give directions to the mason whom she had employed to repair the poor widow's house, which was often shaken by the winter winds. When she returned, her face was very pale, notwithstanding her long walk in the blazing afternoon sun; her eyes shone, and her tightly-compressed lips told of deep but concealed emotion.

Madame André, terrified by the expression of her countenance, drew her into the garden, and inquired, eagerly, "What is the matter, dear mother?"

Madame Derville leaned towards her and whispered, cautiously, "Say nothing, Jeanne; do not alarm any one; to-morrow the children will all be safely at home with their parents. The cholera is in Verville!"

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CHAPTER XX.

THE CHOLERA.

THE two mothers bore silently the burden of their terrible secret. Madame Derville refused to give any details to her daughter so long as the pupils remained beneath her roof. "To-morrow," said she, "we will talk; for to-night, we must keep ourselves strong."

But an insupportable weight settled upon the heart of the younger woman; a weight which was lightened for the grandmother by her wonderful faith and courage. Madame André's dread of the cholera was not for herself, but for her mother; for her own children; for the pupils about to leave her; for all the wretched people in and near the town, in whom she, too, felt a deep interest. Who could tell where the scourge might strike, or for how long a time its ravages would continue? She thought of all this, and went on with the arranging and packing of trunks and bags in a dreamy, preoccupied state of mind.

At an early hour next morning five carriages were drawn up before the door, to convey the little girls to their homes. They were all to return after the vacation; but two months seemed an interminable time to their youthful imaginations. Honorine and Céleste wept as they bade farewell to Madame Derville and to Marie.

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After all the carriages had left, the notary and the collector appeared, to walk home with their daughters, whose lamentations were less bitter than those of the other scholars. "We shall be able," said they, "to come and see Madame Derville and Madame André whenever we like." And this fact seemed to console them for being obliged to remain in the town, while several of their companions were rejoicing in the prospect of going abroad. Honorine was to spend her holidays in Paris; and Edmée was to accompany her father on a trip to Jersey.

Marie sighed as she recounted to her mother the delightful anticipations of her young friends. "But we must stay quietly at home," she said, in a desponding tone, for her heart was very full.

But her eyes shone with delight and satisfaction when her mother answered, gently, "Your father sees all the world for us."

"Yes," said Marie, raising her head; "papa has seen more in one year than all the fathers of our scholars have seen in their whole lives!"

"Except Honorine's father," remarked Madame André.

"Oh, he was only in the merchant service!" said Marie, disdainfully. "I shall write and beg papa to bring me a beautiful lacquered box from Japan. He is there by this time; is he not, mamma?"

Her mother made a sign of assent. "Two years have passed!" she thought, with joy. And then, as the present terror overwhelmed her, she reflected, "For the first time since I knew him, I am thankful

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that he is not with me. I could never have kept him away from danger."

Madame André did not yet fully understand from what source her husband had imbibed the indifference to danger which had often made her tremble.

As soon as the house was placed in order, the books carefully laid aside, and the cupboards cleaned and locked up, Madame Derville summoned her daughter into her chamber. A dress and change of linen were already packed in a satchel. "Jeanne, I am going to Verville," she said, quietly.

"My mother!" Madame André could not utter another word: terror and sorrow took from her all power of speech.

"Yes," repeated the old lady, "I am going to Verville; I cannot leave those poor people all alone; they are already prostrate with fear, although they do not know, as I do, that their own improvidence and bad habits have marked them as sure victims of this dreadful sickness. When I left the place yesterday, one man was already dead; God knows what I shall find there to-day! I leave you without uneasiness, my Jeanne. You are living here in a healthy situation; you have your mother with you, and your children are in no danger. I do not think that the cholera will come here; if it should, I pray God to hold you in his powerful hand. For myself, I do not believe that the disease is contagious; but so many persons believe it to be so, that I am unwilling to alarm any one, and therefore I shall not return here until Verville shall be quite healthy again. Bring the children to me, Jeanne. I must kiss them before I go."

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Madame André had listened to her mother-in-law in silence; she now seized her arm, exclaiming, "And if you should be taken ill, my mother, who will care for you?"

She spoke in a tone of anguish; but Madame Derville replied, "Some of the women in the hamlet will take care of me. Listen, Jeanne: even should I be ill, I forbid you to come to me." And as she saw in the hitherto timid and fearful countenance of Madame André a look of determination, almost of defiance, she continued: "You shall not come; I forbid it, in the name of your husband. Your duty is to your children; you are not alone. The household affairs are well organized, and will go on easily without me. If anything should happen to me, André will need you to console him. It matters little where the old woman lays her bones." Then, returning to practical considerations, she gave to her daughter-in-law, who remained speechless, minute instructions as to the necessary precautions to be taken at home, and in the town, should the cholera appear there. Not a word of her own interests; everything was in common, at the Grange. "You will find my will in the drawer," she said, briefly; and then, to cut short the conversation, she opened the door to Jean, who stood outside, crying,—

"Open, danmamma! open, danmamma!"

Presently the two children were seated upon Madame Derville's knees. Marie said, once or twice, "I am too heavy, grandmother; I shall tire you." But she willingly yielded to the gentle pressure of the hand that kept her in her place. She received, and

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returned, though with a little astonishment, the kisses that rained upon her forehead, her eyes, and her hair. Madame Derville was not, in general, prodigal of her caresses. "Grandmother loves us very much to-day," thought Marie.

The old lady arose. "Go and play in the garden, my darlings," she said.

Marie took Jean's hand, and the children ran away. Lucas and his donkey came to the door with the little cart. Madame Derville herself put into it her satchel, and a box containing medicines and some provisions. Malvina thrust her head out of the kitchen window with a bewildered look; and as Madame Derville was about to step into the humble conveyance, Granny appeared at the door. Her daughter had hastened to find her, to pour out her distress and uneasiness, and to confess her own powerlessness to dissuade Madame Derville from leaving home.

"And why should she not go?" quietly asked Granny. "It would never do to leave those poor people alone. If they knew and were accustomed to me, I would entreat her to stay here and let me go in her place. That would be far better for those who are here,—but not for the poor sick ones yonder," she added, in a tone of humility. "I shall go and tell her to make her mind easy about the house and its affairs."

The two old women exchanged one look; Madame Derville saw instantly, in that quiet, homely house-mother, so modest and retiring, so wounded by a harsh word or even a reproachful glance, the same calm courage by which she herself was inspired.

Perhaps Granny could not thoroughly understand

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or appreciate Madame Derville's brave determination, but it seemed to her a matter of course. "I will watch over Jeanne and the children," she said, simply.

"And I over Verville, with God's help."

"If you are in need of anything or anybody, remember it is to me that you must send," said Granny.

Madame Derville bowed her head consentingly, and, for the first time in their lives, they embraced each other; but they did not speak again.

The little donkey-cart was driven slowly away. Madame André retired to her chamber and wept bitterly, while from the garden came the merry noise of her children at their play.

Granny, still standing at the door, drew her handkerchief across her eyes. "Well, well, one could not leave those poor people all alone!" she repeated, as if to strengthen her heart.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE RETURN.

THE cholera made but a passing visit to Brucourt; only three or four persons were attacked; but one solitary case was sufficient to carry terror into the prosperous town, whose inhabitants were deeply attached to the comforts and pleasures of life. The people shut themselves up in their houses, and dared not venture forth, except to go to church; the bells were tolled; the poor had never before received such bountiful alms; but no sick person was visited or could expect succor, save through the doctor or the priest, so wide-spread was the alarm.

Nothing contributed so largely to the universal panic as the reports of the terrible ravages of the epidemic in Verville. No bells tolled there, for there were no churches; there were no physicians, accustomed to be summoned to the lightest cases of illness; no priests to bury the dead. Malvina brought the news of the town each morning to her two mistresses. "They say there are so many dead down yonder that there are not enough men left to bury them! The vicar of Brucourt has gone there to-day, and I hear of a doctor who makes no charges to the poor people." The next day she brought more startling news. "Mon-

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sieur Brémont's house is closed; at least, no one is in it except Coralie and the gardener. Monsieur and Madame Brémont are gone to Verville; and they say that Monsieur Brémont is the doctor who charges nothing. He has already cured several, and I heard also that—but I do not believe it;" and Malvina lowered her voice instinctively; "still, I heard people say that our Madame has helped Madame Brémont to lay out the dead! Monsieur Brémont carried down a great bag of money, and he pays for all that money can get."

"I can believe anything of my mother that requires courage and Christian charity," said Madame André, whose voice was choked with tears.

Marie had glided unperceived into the room; she said not a word, but clasped her hands tightly together, thinking in her heart, "Oh, if I were only not so little! then I should go to grandmother. I could heat the water and the flannels, and give the poor sick people drink when they were thirsty; I am sure I could be useful. Grandmother is like the saints in the old times: she is afraid of nothing; it is because God is with her. I shall do just as she is doing now, when I am older!"

"God hears thee, Marie," said Granny, who read in the child's face the emotions that filled her young heart.

For once, rumor was right. When the tidings reached "Père Brémont's" of Madame Derville's brave determination to devote herself to the care of the sick in Verville, Monsieur Brémont said nothing; he went out, and took several turns in the garden; then, returning to the sitting-room, he recommenced his silent march up and down.

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His wife, who was quietly working in the window-seat, left him for a long time to his reflections; but at length, finding he did not speak, she rose, and, stopping him in his monotonous walk, said, simply, "Yes, Michel; of course we must go and join Ernestine."

He looked at her without surprise, so accustomed was he to be understood by her without a word of explanation, and replied, "My old knowledge of medicine might be useful there: there is no one who——"

"And I know that my hands will be useful, with or without medical knowledge," interposed Madame Brémont; "and, besides, it is not to be thought of that we should leave Ernestine there alone."

And without further deliberation the husband and wife set out for Verville; "a place," thought Madame Brémont, "in which nothing would induce me to set my foot in ordinary times." But she cheerfully climbed into the little cart, laden with everything that she supposed would be useful to the sick; the resources of her house were taxed to the uttermost; and her love for God and genuine charity towards her suffering neighbors overcame all her disgust and her prejudices.

To Madame Derville the arrival of her cousins was as that of a troop of angels coming to help her. She was already almost worn out by fatigue, and by the accumulation of hard duties which were altogether too much for her strength. It was, therefore, with infinite delight that she heard the strong, resolute tones of Cousin Eulalie's voice.

She had sent her wagon for the vicar immediately upon her arrival; and, as the gardener refused to drive again into Verville, the priest himself brought back the

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horse, and established him in Colette's little stable, where he contentedly munched his hay and oats, unconscious of any danger.

After striking down a large number of victims, the epidemic began to disappear gradually. Its ravages were greatest among the dissipated and drunken men and women of the hamlet. Many of the inhabitants, however, who were not encumbered with a great amount of worldly goods, and whose terror would inevitably have made them an easy prey to the destroying pestilence, fled from their houses in the very beginning, resuming their old wandering, vagabond life. The deserted cabins were immediately transformed into little hospitals; and the sick, being at once separated from their families, were cared for and made comfortable, while the healthy were kept in comparative safety.

Madame Brémont went once to her own home, to procure mattresses and bed-linen. She and her husband, Madame Derville and the priest, were untiring in their work of love,—praying beside the dying, exhorting those who were well, nursing the sick, burying the dead. It was truly said in Brucourt that their zeal was without bounds in Verville; the people almost worshiped their benefactors, and would willingly have kissed their footprints as they walked to and fro upon their errands of mercy. The most hardened hearts were softened now; the most ignorant were anxious to listen to the holy counsels of their ministering angels, who never lost an opportunity of making known that all they did was in accordance with the commands of Christ, as set forth in the Word of God. It was a great

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and glorious work; but it was time for the workers to rest: their strength was not equal to their courage and charity.

One morning Madame Brémont set out to drive to a farm-house at some distance from Verville, where she desired to buy a supply of flour. Colette was no longer able to furnish the necessary provisions to the village: sickness and death had entered her house. The mother of Tranquille had been appointed bread-maker to the little community. The bag of money which Monsieur Brémont had carried with him to Verville was wellnigh exhausted, as were also the small resources of the people themselves. The fishermen went no more to sea; mussels were strictly interdicted during the continuance of the epidemic, and no one could pay even for his loaf of bread. Madame Brémont threw aside all her accustomed prudence and economy, spending freely her savings of several years past, and saying to herself, "God will provide for the future."

The day passed on; those in attendance upon the sick were too busily occupied to take much note of time; but when the shades of evening began to fall and Madame Brémont had not returned, Madame Derville wondered. "Eulalie knows that there are several people dangerously ill," thought she; "but perhaps she could not buy the flour from Père Ravet, and was obliged to go farther. And Heaven only knows whether any of them would allow her to come near enough to speak to them!"

Monsieur Brémont could not quiet his uneasiness by such reflections; and, placing the sick man whom he

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was watching under the care of the young priest, now assisted by two Sisters of Charity, he set out on foot in the direction his wife had taken. It was a beautiful evening; the storm-clouds which had hung so long over the little hamlet had dispersed, leaving a clear blue sky; the air was pure and fresh, and a gentle breeze fanned the long-motionless leaves upon the trees. "Now the sickness is about to leave us," thought Monsieur Brémont,—"please God!" he added, reverently; and then he stepped briskly along the road, listening attentively as he walked for the sound of wheels or the steps of the horse.

But the silence was unbroken; the shadows fell more deeply and darkly over the landscape; the field-laborers had ceased work, and hastened home, fearing exposure to the evening air, which was said to be most dangerous during the epidemic.

Suddenly the prolonged neighing of a horse was heard at a little distance. There was no sound of wheels; but twice the same cry was repeated, echoing through the quiet night and over the deserted fields. Monsieur Brémont did not walk now; he ran; for he said to himself, instantly, "That is old Barbichon's voice,—I am sure of it: Eulalie has been thrown from the carriage!"

The space he had to traverse seemed endless; but, guided by the noise made by the horse, he pressed forward, and presently arrived at a point in the road where he saw the carriage. It was not overturned or broken; and old Barbichon stood quietly in the shafts. But at the foot of a tree by the roadside sat Madame Brémont. Her husband made one bound towards her;

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she opened her eyes, and extended to him an icy hand.

"I do not suffer now," she said, feebly. "God is very good. The flour is there in the carriage. Farewell, Michel, for a little while!" and the eyelids closed again, and forever. The combat, fought in solitude with suffering and death, was over!

Monsieur Brémont uttered not a word, shed not a single tear; he kneeled down for a moment beside the lifeless form, then took it gently in his arms and placed it in the carriage; then, leading the horse, he slowly retraced his steps towards Verville, walking bareheaded by the side of her who had gone forth in the morning, in full health and strength, to seek food for the starving.

Madame Derville had become more and more uneasy. The sound of wheels brought her quickly to the door of the little hospital where she had passed the day; and at the same moment the priest, the Sisters, Tranquille and his mother, and several of the convalescents, came out to welcome Madame Brémont.

Madame Derville caught a glimpse in the moonlight of the pale, ghastly face, and ran to the carriage. "Help me to lift her out, Michel," said she; "I am sure she is ill! Her bed is all ready, and we must take care of her at once."

The poor husband motioned aside those who would have assisted him. "I will take care of her alone," said he; "she is dead!"

The brave woman who fell thus upon the field of battle was the very last victim. She had struggled on to the end, disregarding danger, striving only to cure

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the bodies and save the souls of those she loved for Christ's sake. She had endured the cross, and now God gave her the crown. Her work was finished, and she rested from her labors.

Monsieur Brémont had not deceived himself; with the change of wind, the cholera disappeared entirely. From every point came the same cheering intelligence. Verville could now have plenty of doctors and sick-nurses. The doors of the little hospitals were thrown open; parents hastened to rejoin their children, and children welcomed back their parents. The great danger through which all had passed taught serious lessons to many; and Colette's ale-house, in which so much time and money had been wasted, was closed. The landlord was dead, and his widow had taken refuge in flight.

The devotion of those who had nursed and consoled the people, without regard to danger, seemed about to bear fruit. The labors of Madame Derville and her cousins were talked of far and near; and the needy condition of the little hamlet was at length understood. The citizens of Brucourt promised to establish a school, and there was even talk of building a church. The mother of Tranquille, and two or three other women, respectably clad through Madame Derville's efforts, now attended service in the chapel at Brucourt. A few timid persons were still fearful of contagion, and objected to their presence. No one was hard-hearted enough to repulse them directly from the house of God, but the benches nearest to those on which they sat were left empty.

The poor women were happily unconscious of the

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cause. "People used to say there was never an empty chair in the church," they remarked, sometimes; "but nowadays there is always plenty of room."

The good priest, who had returned to Brucourt, smiled sadly, but did not enlighten them.

Madame Derville went back to the Grange; but before entering her own house she accompanied Monsieur Brémont to his desolate home in the town. He walked calmly into the familiar room, looking round for the arm-chair in which his wife used to sit with her work near the window. "I shall stay here," he said, after a few moments. "I thought of settling myself at Verville, but I shall be nearer to her here, in this room. I will go sometimes to Verville; Barbichon can take me. It will not be for long, I hope; I am older than she, and her last words were, 'Farewell, Michel, for a little while!'"

Madame Derville left him in silence; he did not notice her departure, but repeated again and again to himself, "Still, I must go often to Verville; she has left work for me to do."

Marie met her grandmother at the door of the Grange. The vacation was over. No one had now any dread of Brucourt, where the epidemic had raged with far less violence than in other places; and the most timid were ashamed to express any fear of Madame Derville's return.

"Certainly, there is no one in the world like Madame," said Honorine, who had returned from her journey to Paris, and listened with intense interest to the history of the cholera in Verville.

When the disease was at its height, Madame Evrard

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had come often to the Grange, for news of "Ernestine," as she always called the good grandmother; and Madame Brémont had been sincerely lamented by many who knew her only by her works. But Madame Derville had positively forbidden any one belonging to her to visit her in Verville; and it was not until the moment of her return to the Grange that they could see for themselves the effects of all her labor and sorrow.

Marie threw herself into her arms before she could cross the threshold, or Madame André could utter a word of welcome; but she soon disengaged herself from the dear hands that held her so tenderly, and stationed herself in front of Madame Derville; after carefully surveying her from head to foot, "You do not look at all ill, grandmother," she cried, in a triumphant tone. "To be sure, you are rather thin, but your eyes shine just as brightly as ever!"

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CHAPTER XXII.

GRANDMOTHER'S TURN.

YES, Madame Derville's eyes were still bright and penetrating, and now an expression of softness and tenderness had come into them, adding a new charm to her countenance; but in other respects she was not the same. She had failed rapidly under the weight of the anxiety and labor of the past two months; and in a few days after her return home she dropped down, quietly and uncomplainingly, just as Madame Brémont had done, who was far younger and stronger than she.

Granny saw the true state of the case immediately. "What do you say?" she inquired of her daughter, who was congratulating herself on Madame Derville's improvement.

She had consented to lie in bed, "for the day;" and Marie, grave and silent, was seated at the foot of the bed. "I wish only to sit and look at grandmother," said she.

"I say," replied Madame André, "that she is not so entirely prostrated as I feared at first; and that she will be almost well again before the scholars return." The devoted daughter-in-law was so happy in the reunion with her mother that she felt confident and hopeful for the future.

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Granny shrugged her shoulders: "*I* say, that before the scholars return she will be completely bedridden. There is some hidden malady; perhaps it is only fatigue, but at our age such illnesses either last a long, long time,—or they end very soon!" she finished, speaking in so low a voice that no one heard her.

She had said enough, however, to distress and alarm Madame André, who burst into tears. Granny laid her hand upon her mouth. "The time has come, Jeanne," she said, simply, "for us to show our courage; surely the good example that she has set you is not to be forgotten!"

And it was neither forgotten nor neglected. Granny's experience had warned her truly. By the time another day had passed, Madame Derville was unable to rise from her bed.

Marie immediately assumed the post of nurse. "I can take excellent care of grandmother," said she, with the childish boldness of eight years; and the sick woman nodded her head affirmatively.

"You will have enough to do, Jeanne, with all the children on your hands. It will be best to form them all into one class, and Honorine might be mistress among the little ones."

"Mamma declares that she will take charge of the little ones," replied Madame André; "she, who would never teach a single lesson, even to her own children!"

Madame Derville smiled. "Have I not often told you that we could not do without your mother? Now I shall be ill comfortably and quietly."

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Granny laughed heartily when Madame Derville thanked her for the offer of assistance. Then, with tearful eyes, she said, "It is only right that the seed sown should bring forth some fruit."

"It is only good seed which brings forth fruit,—'some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold,'" gravely quoted Marie, who had listened without comprehending. "The 'good seed' is Granny, is it not, mamma?" she asked, as she repeated the little conversation to her mother.

"Granny is the 'good ground,'" said Madame André; "the 'good seed' is grandmother's example, which will bear fruit, I hope, in my little Marie."

Marie was ambitious.

"And you know, mamma, one single seed bears a great many grains."

Madame Piérard was right in saying that the time had come for all the inmates of the Grange to exert themselves to the utmost. The scholars returned, one by one; and two or three families entreated Madame André to receive their children also.

But on this point Granny was positive. "It is altogether impossible," said she, "for us to admit any new boarding-scholars. We shall only just be able to keep the old ones, who love Madame Derville and will be willing to yield to circumstances."

The mothers, who were anxious for the admission of their children, protested that they were also ready to love Madame Derville, and to conform to all regulations necessary for her comfort.

"That may be," said Granny; "but we must wait until she is better; at present we have not a spare room

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in order, and it is impossible to allow workmen to come here now."

The mother of Edmée was tempted to keep her daughter at home. "You are twelve years old now," she said; "and, besides, the cholera has been in Brucourt."

But the child begged and prayed that she might return to school. "I know nothing at all," she insisted; "but now I shall go on very quickly. Madame André teaches the large class, and Madame Derville's illness will make no change there." And she said to herself, "Honorine and I can be of use to the dear ladies; we are the oldest in the school; this is not the time to desert them, when they are in trouble."

Madame André and Granny needed all the aid which their good-hearted scholars were so ready to afford. It was a point of honor with them not to shorten the hours of instruction by a moment, and to give to the children out of school the same care and attention as ever. If the beds were all made, and the sleeping-rooms neatly swept and dusted, before Malvina, who passed many nights in the sick-chamber, came downstairs, it was a voluntary arrangement of Honorine's, cheerfully carried out by the rest of the pupils.

The housekeeping duties were shared between Granny and her daughter, neither being willing to relinquish her part in nursing the invalid. They watched over her by turns, and Marie rarely left her room during the day. Madame André had dispensed with all lessons for the child. "What you learn in grandmother's chamber will be of more value to you than a few chapters of geography and English," said she.

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Marie was too happy in being allowed to stay, to think of inquiring what were the important lessons she could learn by giving drink to her grandmother, listening to her breathing while she slept, and softly caressing her emaciated hands.

Madame Piérard was seriously uneasy,—much more so than the doctor. He was a new-comer into the town, and a warm admirer of Madame Derville. He said that her illness was only the reaction after great fatigue and over-exertion; that she was growing old, and could not recover quickly.

Granny listened to him without replying, on his first visit; but, after he left, she murmured to herself, "He is young—he is very young; he does not see, as I do, that she has no wish to recover. She feels that her work is done, and she is willing to pass quietly away to heaven. I see it all, and she has well earned her rest. But what is to become of us without her? And André has not written for so long!"

One day Madame Derville was a little stronger than usual. "I am so glad," cried Marie, triumphantly, "that grandmother is just a little impatient to-day! I am delighted when she scolds me for holding her glass crooked, and pretends not to see that she has herself spilled the *tisane* upon the quilt!"

On this day Madame André ventured to admit Monsieur Brémont into the sick-room. He had made many visits of inquiry, but had not yet seen "Ernestine." He looked paler and more changed than she, as he seated himself at the foot of the bed, and there was in his countenance an expression of sternness never visible there in former days. He exchanged only a

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few words with his cousin, and then sat plunged in deep thought for several moments. Suddenly he rose, so abruptly that Marie jumped from her chair and looked uneasily towards her grandmother, who was, she knew, too weak to bear any agitation.

"Ernestine," exclaimed Monsieur Brémont, in a much louder tone than was prudent, "so soon as you are cured we will go together to Verville!"

"Do you still go there sometimes?" feebly asked the invalid.

Her cousin shook his head. "Not yet; I have not the courage. I am waiting for you. When you are well again, you shall show me where to build a church there. It will take fifty years for the government or the commune to find the money for one. I will let them build the school-house; but—I am all alone, you know; the money was hers—I have no children, and if I could build a church on the spot where I found her,—but that is too far off——"

Madame Derville raised herself upon her elbow, and listened intently. During these weary days of illness, though mind and body were alike prostrated, she thought constantly of the misery, ignorance, and destitution, moral and spiritual, that she had seen during her stay among the poor fisher-people. She appreciated at their full value the promises of the authorities. "A church! a school! it was beautiful to talk about, but where were the necessary funds? Verville has had a call from God, but there is no one to answer. How can they believe, if no preacher is sent to teach them? Who is to instruct the ignorant men and women and the little children?" The melancholy picture resolved

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itself into a kind of phantom, which haunted the sick woman's chamber day and night.

Marie guessed at a part of the trouble, from noticing the eagerness with which her grandmother always asked for news from Verville; she now leaned against Monsieur Brémont's knee, her face beaming with delight. "This is one of grandmother's good days," said she; "to-day her eyes have not that dark circle around them!" and she listened for Madame Derville's reply.

"You are right, Michel," she said, slowly, and as if she feared that the emotion which swelled her heart might overpower her. "It is right, for her and for Verville. But it will not be enough to build the church; the people must be prepared to go into it; the children must be gathered together, and fitted to enter the school. Who will do all that? Shall it be you?"

"Yes, with you, so soon as you are well again."

"With me!" The invalid lay quiet for a moment, then, stretching out her hand to her cousin, she said, "If God wills it, I am ready."

"I shall wait for you," he answered, like a man who does not wish to be hurried.

"His sorrow is not yet healed," said Madame Derville to herself; "he must have time."

But even in his grief and sadness Monsieur Brémont had brought her the strengthening cordial so long and vainly sought by her physician. He had brought back to her a wish to live, by showing her another field of usefulness upon earth.

"Help me to get well, my child," said Madame

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Derville, taking Marie's hand in her own after Monsieur Brémont had left her, "and you shall go with me to Verville to choose the site for the new church!"

Marie possessed that heaven-sent gift, a capability for nursing the sick; it may be, of course, highly developed in those of riper years, but it is spontaneous and natural, and may often be seen in a child of even Marie's tender age. She replied calmly and without giving vent, for a moment, to her accustomed enthusiasm, "But first of all, grandmother, you must grow strong enough to stand; and to grow strong you must take a whole tablespoonful of your jelly, without saying, 'There! that is enough!—I am not hungry!'"

Madame Derville smiled, and took the jelly without a word of objection. Half an hour later she slept soundly, while Marie watched her faithfully and patiently; although after a little time, as the day was fine, the sun shining brightly, and the window open, the little girl glided between the curtains, and, leaning against the window-frame, gazed into the garden.

It was the hour of recreation; but, instead of the usual hubbub, the noisy games and shouts of laughter, all was quiet; the little girls were either seated under the trees, or walking in groups of two or three up and down the alleys, talking in subdued tones. Some amused themselves by digging in the little plots devoted to the children; all were tranquilly happy. Many glances were thrown towards the windows of Madame Derville's chamber, and when at length Marie appeared there, her companions crept softly, one by one, to a spot beneath, whence they could greet her by signs and ask for news of her grandmother.

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There was no need to enforce silence and good order; if any one of the youngest children, carried away by good spirits and high health, thoughtlessly laughed or sang too loud, or ran through the house, slamming the doors, she was instantly pounced upon by Honorine, Edmée, or Céleste: "You forget Madame!" and the offender was in a moment brought to repentance and silence.

Marie smilingly returned the greetings of her young friends. She had invented a miniature post-office for her entertainment during the many solitary hours passed in the sick-room. A double string was fastened to the window-sill, the two ends hanging down; to these ends were attached bits of paper, letters and messages from the scholars. Marie drew up the strings, and received the dispatches, promptly throwing her answers from the window. Her replies were usually only bulletins reporting the state of the invalid. There was always a rush to receive them, but each note was addressed to a particular individual, to whom belonged the honor of reading the contents to the expectant audience. To-day Marie wrote, "Grandmother is asleep; she has eaten her jelly." A few moments afterwards she continued, "Grandmother talked for a long time this morning with my cousin Michel; he has some excellent plans, but they are too long to put in a letter." She tried to draw the picture of a church on her paper, hoping that her correspondents might guess from it at the subject of the "excellent plans;" but no one took any notice of the irregular little sketch.

Honorine, who was sitting at the other end of the garden, called the children to come to her; and Ma-

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dame Derville stirring in her sleep, Marie returned to her station at the foot of the bed. As she took her seat, she said to herself, "I wonder what Honorine and Edmée were doing in the garden? I could not see them, but they had something white, I am sure; and Céleste motioned to me to look, but I had not time: they changed their place, and I saw nothing. What could it have been?" Suddenly Marie jumped from her chair; she heard the gentle lowing of a cow so near the house that the animal seemed to be actually in the garden; but, although she ran quickly to the window, she saw nothing; the scholars had returned to their studies, and the garden was empty; but she thought she perceived in the distance that the gate leading into the orchard, which hitherto was always closed, now stood open.

The meadows were rented to a neighboring farmer, and did not, in those days, belong to the Grange. "When we are rich enough to buy a cow!" Madame Derville had often said; but that day seemed still far distant. The alms given at Verville before and during the cholera, and her own long illness, had almost exhausted the family resources. "A cow would certainly be a very great convenience!" sighed Madame Piérard.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REVELATIONS.

MARIE'S eyes and ears had not deceived her; she had seen something behind the hedge, and heard a new sound in the garden. The house also was full of mysteries. Madame Piérard was the confidante of some of the pupils; Madame André, of others. Only Madame Derville and Marie were excluded from any share in the great secrets by which they were eventually to be surprised and delighted. It was easy enough to hide everything from "grandmother," but even at the side of the invalid's bed it was difficult to blind Marie. Her keen eyes were always wide open, and from her post at the window she kept vigilant watch over all doings in the garden.

For several days, however, the weather was rainy and disagreeable, so that the pupils spent their play-hours in-doors, assembling either in the parlor or the dining-room, and Marie, who seldom came down-stairs, except to take her meals or to accompany her mother and Jean in a walk, made little progress towards the discovery of the various plots. Jean had tried several times to disclose in his baby-language the most important news of all; but his mother stifled his words with kisses, and Marie understood nothing.

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The crisis was, however, approaching; for Madame Derville was now really convalescent. Her strength returned, slowly but surely. Monsieur Brémont was admitted whenever he presented himself, for his conversation, which always turned upon Verville and the projected church, acted like a charm upon the invalid. She began also to take a lively interest in all in the house, asking at first only for Céleste, Honorine, and Edmée; but soon all the children were invited, one by one, to make a visit to the room so long closed against them.

"I wish I might stay here with you all day!" said Céleste to Marie; "can you not hide me in a corner? I will not make the least noise." Marie laughed; poor Céleste could not walk across the room without knocking against the chairs, and her shoes invariably creaked. "It is like being in church, to be with your grandmother," continued Céleste; "it makes one good."

To be sure, the little girl often slept soundly in church, through the whole sermon; but Marie understood her feelings. "I have never in my life wished so much to be good as while I have been nursing grandmother; that is what Céleste means, I suppose."

Honorine was deeply moved during her first interview with Madame Derville. "Even if it were necessary, in order to be like her, to suffer all the pain and grief she has endured, I would accept them gladly!" thought the young girl, as she left the room.

Madame André's heart overflowed with gratitude to God. She had despaired of the recovery of Madame Derville, from an instinctive feeling that she was so fully

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prepared and anxious to go. Each evidence of resignation to God's will,—each languid smile, which showed the triumph of faith over present suffering,—each look of love and patience that shone from the beautiful eyes, bright and keen even in the midst of illness,—had penetrated the heart of the devoted daughter like a sword. "We cannot keep her here!" she would exclaim to Granny. "If I could only once see her a little vexed, as she used to be, I might hope!" But God had still work to be done by his faithful servant.

When her innumerable household cares allowed her a few moments of liberty, Granny was accustomed to sit in Madame Derville's room, during the recreation-hour, giving her the news of the day, and knitting busily meanwhile on stockings for Jean. She told of the follies and the blunders of the children; of the good deeds, unperceived perhaps by all eyes save her own; of the little naughtinesses and tricks that only she had noticed. The convalescent smiled at the recital, and was secretly amused by the acute observation hidden under the impassive exterior of the good old woman.

"And what do you think of Jeanne?" she asked, one day.

Granny hesitated, and grew red. "She is very happy in seeing you in so fair a way for recovery."

"Yes, but she looks pale; she is worn out by fatigue."

"It is not that," replied Granny; and then, without thinking to whom she was speaking, she allowed the secret of her daughter's unhappiness to escape. "It is because she has no letters from André!"

Madame Derville did not reply, but leaned back in

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her arm-chair, looking paler than at any time during her illness. The days had slipped away, while she, shut up in her little room, had taken no note of time. One week after another had passed, but she knew not when a foreign mail arrived, or what letters it brought. She had forgotten the day of the month,—almost the name of the month itself; and now, as she strove, by a painful effort, to reckon the time, she said to herself, "The cholera, and Eulalie's death, and my own illness, have made me lose my memory!"

It was, in reality, the middle of November. "Saint Martin's summer" was over, and already the winter rain and fogs had begun to hang over Brucourt, interposing a dense veil between it and the sea. Madame Derville reflected, "We have had no letters from André since—since—the beginning of August, when the cholera first appeared!" Three months and a half had passed, and two mails must have arrived without bringing letters. "God keep my son!" were the only words she uttered; but when Marie returned soon afterwards from the daily walk exacted by her mother, she started back in alarm.

"What have you been doing, grandmother, while I was away?" she cried.

Madame Derville drew the child into her arms, and kissed her tenderly, but only said, "I am tired; help me to lie down on my bed."

After this day, however, to the great astonishment of Granny, who had bitterly lamented her imprudence, Madame Derville's convalescence progressed rapidly, as if hastened on by her own energetic will. "I shall be needed at home also!" was indeed her secret thought.

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In the midst of her anxiety and suspense, Madame André partially regained her cheerfulness, and was strengthened anew by the faith and courage of her mother-in-law. "She knows that there are no letters from André" (Granny had confessed her blunder), "and still she is hopeful. I must also hope!" Every glance at the mother brought strength and security to the wife. But no one saw Madame Derville when she was in the solitude of her own chamber. Her tears were shed alone.

The secret preoccupation of the two mistresses did not sadden the light-hearted children. Marie often thought, "Papa writes very seldom;" but she remembered having been told that in his youth he had sometimes allowed three or four months to pass without writing to his mother, and so did not distress herself. The pupils, who had never known the captain, and who were quite accustomed to long silence on the part of their own fathers, took no heed of the correspondence with China; they had much more important and pressing business nearer home.

All the little heads were full of the same subject. Now that Marie had resumed, to a certain extent, her position among her companions, it became quite impossible to conceal *one* of the mysteries from her; but by dint of much care and manœuvring, she was as yet ignorant of the second and most overwhelming secret.

Soon, however, all was ready; and the youthful conspirators had neither pretext nor wish for further concealment; a single day was now to reveal all.

At the appointed moment, Honorine and Céleste tapped gently at the door of Madame Derville's room.

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She was seated near the fire; there had been no rain for two days, but the air was sharp, and the pale December sun yielded but little warmth, even at mid-day. The two young girls advanced solemnly, like ambassadors charged with an important mission.

"Madame," said Honorine, "your pupils desire us to ask whether you feel strong enough to come into the parlor for a short time."

"The fire is lighted," broke in Céleste, "and the large arm-chair is drawn close to the hearth."

"We wish," resumed Honorine, greatly shocked by the familiar address of her companion, "to beg your acceptance of a slight token of our respect and affection——"

Here Céleste could no longer contain herself, and laughed outright. Then she threw her arms round Marie, who stood listening with delight to Honorine's eloquent speech, and kissed her again and again.

Madame Derville laughed also, but she replied courteously and with as profound a bow as could be executed without rising from her chair, "I shall certainly do myself the honor of accepting the invitation of my pupils. Is my presence required immediately?"

"Yes,—this very moment!" answered Céleste.

But Honorine, faithful to the programme she had prepared in advance, curtsied deeply, and replied, in measured tones, "We shall ask for one-quarter of an hour, Madame, to complete our preparations."

The ambassadors retired. Marie made a movement to follow them, then returned, smiling, to her grandmother's side. "You will need me for a staff," she said. "I shall wait to conduct you to the reception."

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"The reception held by those young ladies?"

"No, indeed; your own reception: every one will be there in full dress. As I passed through the dormitory just now, I saw Granny taking some fine clothes from a closet, and mamma called to me to put on my embroidered apron. Will you change your cap, grandmother? You do not look your best to-day. I told them you had slept well, but that your eyes were heavy." And, without waiting for consent, the little girl climbed upon a chair to lift down a bandbox from the top of the wardrobe.

"Not my very best cap!—I could not think of it!" exclaimed Madame Derville. But she let Marie have her way.

The cap was put on, and Marie proceeded to wrap "*my patient*," as she always said, in an ancient shawl of fine white cashmere. "Now you are all ready; and how beautiful you are!" cried the child, gently smoothing the white locks that strayed over her grandmother's pale brow. "Now they must not keep us waiting, or you will be tired beforehand. Ah, here they come!"

Steps were heard upon the stairs; this time, Edmée and Artémise approached, with great pomp, to escort Madame Derville. "You cannot have all the honors, though your name is Honorine," Edmée had said, good-naturedly; and Honorine was content, as she was to be stationed in the parlor to receive "Madame."

Marie would yield to no one the actual support of her grandmother. "You are too tall, Edmée, for a walking-stick, because grandmother is little; and you, Artémise, are not quite tall enough."

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"I am eight years old, however; as old as you."

"*Nine* years old, in fifteen days!" replied Marie; "I shall be nine in a fortnight; and, at any rate, I am much taller than you."

This being an incontestable fact, the escort marched in front, Madame Derville and Marie following slowly; the door of the parlor was thrown open, and, in the most impressive tones she could command, Edmée announced, "Madame!"

All the inmates of the room, who were seated in a circle, rose *en masse*, according to Honorine's direction. Madame Derville, following Marie's eager looks, saw upon the large table in the middle of the room a superb coverlet, made of cambric and guipure lace; a real work of art. This it was that had absorbed the energies of the children during all their hours of recreation, for two whole months. Honorine had begun working during the holidays; in her enthusiastic admiration of Madame Derville's courage and goodness, she had resolved to present to her a cushion of her own making. Afterwards the ambition of the whole school was excited, and all desired to unite in one grand present. Granny, Madame André, and Honorine had organized the work, allotting to each the portion suited to her ability.

Even Malvina had discovered in her trunk some squares of guipure which she had made long ago, at school; and she entreated "Mam'selle Honorine" to use them for "Madame's coverlet."

Her lace was neither so fine nor so well made as the rest, and the directors were greatly tempted to lay it aside; but Granny was touched by the evidence of

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the girl's good will, and contrived to have her offering accepted. Malvina now stood outside the door, listening eagerly to the chattering of the children.

Madame Derville admired, laughed, and thanked, to their hearts' content. "I understand now," said she, "why there has been so wonderful a silence and quietness in the house! All your play-hours were consecrated to this Herculean task. How could you consent to their undertaking such a labor?" she asked, in a reproachful tone, turning to Granny and Madame André, who had left the group at the table, and were looking from the window into the garden.

"We did not ask the advice of any one! we began it all alone!" cried some of the smallest children, who had done little or nothing, and had been with difficulty prevented from spoiling the whole thing.

"This magnificent affair will put my old India curtains to the blush," said Madame Derville, making, through her spectacles, a more minute survey of the work before her; "but I warn you that I have no money to buy new ones!"

"We will make——" But Artémise was silenced by Honorine, who laid her finger on her lips. The children exchanged glances, which showed that the same ambitious idea entered each little head: "We will make a set of curtains to match the coverlet!"

Céleste had slipped out of the room. By degrees there was a general movement towards the window, though Madame Derville still sat in her arm-chair near the table, inspecting her beautiful gift, counting the number of squares, and endeavoring to recognize the individual work of each donor. She was deeply touched

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and gratified by the evidence of her pupils' affection, but a little annoyed as she thought of the labor they had expended upon it and the many hours of recreation they had lost in her service. Marie remained by her grandmother's side, in an expectant attitude.

Presently a shout arose in the garden, and at the same moment Madame Piérard and Honorine opened both the windows. Madame André threw a mantle round her mother-in-law and gently drew her towards the casement. On the lawn, in the middle of the garden, and immediately facing the house, stood a beautiful white-and-brown cow. Her horns were wreathed with a garland of chrysanthemums, which seemed to disquiet her, for she raised her head as the windows were opened, and gazed around with a bewildered stare. A stout countryman held her by a rope; and Céleste, radiant and triumphant, looked up to Madame Derville, exclaiming, in a voice almost stifled by excitement and agitation,—

"Papa and mamma, and my grandmother also, send you this cow, Madame! You will soon grow well and strong if you drink plenty of good milk; and your cow gives twenty quarts a day! Papa charged me not to forget to tell you that!" And, in the excess of her delight, Céleste bestowed a hearty embrace upon the beautiful animal, which submitted patiently to the caress. "She knows me," exclaimed Céleste, "because she was born upon our farm; and her name is Brunette!"

"And we have hired the little meadow behind the garden, my mother," said Madame André, merrily, "although the good farmer pretends that he will take no pay, because the pasture is for *your* cow!"

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CHAPTER XXIV.

"TO WORK, FOR VERVILLE!"

BRUNETTE'S excellent milk, and, still more, the affection that was lavished upon Madame Derville, worked wonders. She even resumed her place at the head of her class of little ones, although she was still pale and thin, and her strength had not entirely returned. The daily toil was now so well organized and divided that Madame Piérard and her daughter were surprised to find how many hours of leisure they enjoyed.

"It seems to me that I have nothing to do since you have come back to us," said Jeanne to her mother-in-law. "Between Verville and your illness, we have been without you, so to speak, for four months."

"Everything seems very easy to me also," replied Madame Derville. "Your mother has made a mistake in depriving herself during all these years of the pleasure of teaching. She has a decided capacity for instruction, and the children have progressed marvelously under her care."

"That was chiefly because they were so anxious to please you," said Madame André, laughing. "Mamma soon discovered the secret. If her scholars were listless or indolent, she had only to say, 'If Madame were here, she would be displeased,' and they began in-

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stantly to work at their lessons. As for the large girls, they scarcely allowed me time to breathe, so impatient were they to finish their recitations and run away to the wonderful coverlet. The pattern of the guipure squares often interfered sadly with their devotion to history and geography." But while she spoke thus gaily, the smile faded from her face; and, suddenly kneeling beside Madame Derville, she laid her head upon her knee like a child, asking, wearily, "*Why* does not André write? If only we knew where he is!"

She had caused inquiries to be made at the Naval Bureau, and the replies were reassuring as to the safety of the frigate, no reports of any disaster having been received. The third foreign mail, however, had arrived, without bringing letters from the captain.

Madame Derville tenderly stroked her daughter's cheek, saying, "I *feel* that he still lives! let us pray for him!" Then she changed the conversation, not daring to allow full vent to her emotions.

Now that the pupils were less preoccupied, they began to notice the anxiety and distress of their two beloved teachers. More than once Marie found her mother in tears, as she stood at the window gazing sadly towards the sea. One day, the scene without was gloomy and depressing in the extreme. The sky was dark, and a furious gale drove in the great gray waves with a sullen roar upon the beach. The wind was so high and the sea so rough that the noise could be heard at a great distance,—in Brucourt, and in the peaceful, sheltered valleys.

"What frightful weather!" said Madame André, as Marie came to her side.

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The child whispered, "But, dear mamma, the ocean near China is very, very far off: perhaps it is a bright, sunshiny day there."

"You are right," replied her mother; but Marie's geographical method of consolation soon lost its effect. The steamships which could be seen upon the horizon, driven hither and thither by the fury of the storm, the sailing-vessels drifting helplessly before the wind, were silent witnesses to the irresistible power of the elements and the weakness of man.

After a few moments, seeing that her mother's tears continued to flow, Marie spoke again: "Our Saviour Jesus Christ said once to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' and you know, mamma, 'there was a great calm.'" And in these words the almost despairing wife found strength and comfort.

Madame Derville, more active and more sanguine than her daughter-in-law, notwithstanding her age and the various trials she had passed through, sought and found relief from her anxiety in her new mission at Verville. She had conquered for herself, in the poor little hamlet, a veritable empire. The population had been weeded by the epidemic, and the vagabonds, who had deserted their miserable homes on its first appearance, did not return, except a few who reappeared upon the shore and went straight to their old haunt the ale-house. Colette was gone, however; and a neat little shop supplied the place of the tavern. At Madame Derville's urgent request, Monsieur Brémont had bought the building and established the mother of Tranquille in business there. The boy ran errands, and went into the town to renew his mother's stock

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of merchandise; the little girls played among the rocks and gathered a few mussels, taking care also of the youngest child, who was now beginning to walk. The family was altogether more comfortable than during the life of the husband and father.

"You see I was right when I told you to put your trust in God," said Madame Derville to the widow, whom she had consoled, sustained, and raised from the depth of misery.

The poor woman was not a great talker, and knew not how to express the feelings of her heart; but she made up for her silence when alone with Tranquille. "It is not to every one in the world," said she, "that the good God sends his angels!"

And Tranquille answered, rolling up his sleeves, and gazing at the scars still remaining on his arm, "If I had not hurt myself that day, we should all have died of hunger!"

"And without Madame, what would have become of us, and all the people here, during the cholera?" responded his mother.

Of course Madame Derville's authority was not quite absolute. Notwithstanding all the services she had rendered and continued to render them, there was still a number of "bad folks," as they were called, who clung to their evil ways; but even these respected her to a certain extent. There was a strong prejudice among them against the projected church and school, which involved, as they knew, a system of surveillance by no means desirable. Still a decided moral improvement in the mass of the people had resulted from the visit of the epidemic, and friendly relations were estab-

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lished between the fishermen and Monsieur Brémont, the priest, and Madame Derville.

One man, formerly the dread of the whole population, but now quite transformed by the fear of death, in which he had lived for so many weeks, and who, during his illness, had been carefully nursed by the little band of good Samaritans, came to Monsieur Brémont as soon as he heard of the proposed church in Verville. "I was a stone-cutter," said he, "before I went astray; and I still know how to work. If you will employ me on the building of the church, I will give you the pay for one day's work in every week." And as Monsieur Brémont, greatly touched, was about to decline the generous offer, the man continued, hesitatingly: "It is not for you alone I wish to do it, nor even for Madame Derville,—you understand! It was, after all, the good God who cured me."

And one of Monsieur Brémont's first remarks to his master-builder was, "There is a stone-cutter here in the place, who says he understands his business. I know nothing of his ability; but I wish you to find work of some kind for him." The builder began to object, and to raise difficulties. "If you accept my contract," said Monsieur Brémont, "the man must be employed." And the name of Pierre Ormont was enrolled in the workshop.

He soon made a place for himself; and at the end of a fortnight, when the wages were paid, he brought to Monsieur Brémont the price of two days' work. "Here is the money," said he, "for the two Mondays: those days are yours for the church."

Monsieur Brémont took the money, put it into a box

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by itself, and showed it to Madame Derville, saying, "Here are the first-fruits. I shall make a special use of it. It is money that has cost me dear!"

The work went slowly on; but by degrees the foundations of the church were laid, and the walls rose above the ground. The funds were not yet appropriated by the authorities for the school-house. No one had money; no one knew how it could be raised. The commune to which the little village belonged could do nothing, and the municipal council of Brucourt was disinclined to make any sacrifices for the benefit of an obscure hamlet on the shore inhabited by a few poor fishermen and their families.

Madame Derville despaired of obtaining sufficient money even to begin the school-house. Every Thursday, when there was a half-holiday, she walked to Verville, accompanied by Marie, and gathered together as many children as possible, in the little room formerly occupied as a drinking-saloon in Colette's house. "Then," to use Marie's own words, "grandmother gives a lesson to the older ones, and I teach the little children their letters. There are some girls of twelve who cannot read a word; but they will not listen to me. Grandmother makes them all wash their faces and hands before she says a prayer; and when the lesson is over, she gives each child a little present,—an apple, or some sugar-candy. But they forget almost everything we teach them from one Thursday until the next, and they improve very slowly."

One morning, Monsieur Brémont appeared at the Grange. "I have bought Jacques Gresnet's house," said he.

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"And what shall you do with it?" asked Madame Derville, much surprised.

It was a very old house, the only one built of stone in Verville; and rumor said that in old times, when only a few fishermen lived along the shore, it had been a rendezvous for smugglers and other desperate characters, who were concealed in it, until they could escape by sea to England or some other port.

"I intend to live there," replied Monsieur Brémont, quietly; and his cousin started to her feet. She dared not believe what her ears surely heard; yet a new hope dawned upon her heart.

"You will live there?" she repeated.

"Yes; there is a good room up-stairs, where I shall sleep and take my meals; and in the small room adjoining I can keep my books. On the first floor I shall hold a little school, repeating to the children the lessons you teach them on Thursdays."

"But your own work? the book you are writing?"

"I must work for God now," replied Monsieur Brémont, simply. "Eulalie is working for Him, up above!"

Madame Derville could not speak. She looked silently at Cousin Michel; long ago he had become entirely absorbed in study, research, and reflection, and had abandoned all practical cares and occupations to his wife. Now, sorrow and tenderness for her memory had, by the grace of God, led him to undertake a work which would necessitate a life of self-sacrifice and the relinquishment of all his favorite pursuits; and Madame Derville loved and admired him more than ever before.

Without waiting for a reply from her, he continued, "I should never have summoned up courage to go back

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there without you; but now that I have returned, and have seen again the people to whom she ministered, the children she held in her arms and for whom she gave her life, I feel as if she were still with me. She is in Verville; I must be there also! So long as I can work, I shall do so; and I shall leave enough money behind to pay for a schoolmaster after my death."

Madame Derville rose, and gave her hand to her cousin. "God will be with you!" she said. "I may now grow old and feeble in peace: my poor Verville will not be abandoned."

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CHAPTER XXV.

TIDINGS.

VERVILLE and its interests no longer sufficed to distract Madame Derville's thoughts, or to dispel her anxiety. Her faith and trust in God forbade her to murmur, and strengthened her for the fulfillment of her daily task; but hope grew faint, and each day as it passed carried away with it one of the many illusions with which she endeavored to cheat herself.

When Madame André saw that her mother-in-law now wore constantly her dress of plain black stuff, she said to herself, "Perhaps I shall soon put on the same dress!"

Monsieur Brémont repeated again and again, "It would certainly be known at the Naval Bureau had anything serious happened to your husband; perhaps he is ill for the time, and cannot write,—that is all."

Alas! the captain's wife and mother would have been thankful to know that he was only ill.

One day, all the scholars were at their lessons, the two mistresses at their post, and Jean "helping" Granny as she went about her household occupations. He followed her faithfully from room to room, often disarranging when she had carefully put things in order. At length he established himself in a high chair beside

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the table, upon which she had placed some pots of jam, preparatory to covering them anew. This was an employment especially admired by Jean, who was sometimes allowed to put the tip of his finger into a jar, and to eat the jelly adhering to the old papers as they were taken off. From time to time he turned towards the window; the wind rattled the sash, and the rain dashed against the panes; it was only three o'clock in the afternoon, but the daylight already began to wane.

"Ugly rain!" exclaimed the child, who had been weather-bound all day. Suddenly he cried out, "I see a man!"

Granny rose from her seat, surprised and confused; a man indeed stood at the door, attired in so outlandish a costume that she said instantly to herself, "It is a Chinese!" but she stepped forward into the little vestibule, with instinctive hospitality. "Chinese or not, I would not let a dog stay out-of-doors in such weather as this!" And then came a second thought, quick as a flash,—the thought that would have been first with Madame Derville,—"Perhaps he brings news of André!"

The Chinese was in the vestibule, with the door closed behind him. Two or three little boys who had played truant from school, and who had followed the poor stranger in spite of the rain, stood on the opposite side of the street, looking very cross. No one stirred in the school-room. Madame André's voice could be heard, reading aloud and commenting on the funeral oration of Bossuet, which was the subject of the lesson in literature. But presently Jean knocked at the door with all the force of his little fists. His

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mother turned a deaf ear to the summons; but Céleste, who sat on the end of the bench nearest the door, stretched out her hand without saying a word, and gave admission to the little fellow.

"Man! tail! horse!" cried he, in great excitement; the long queue of the Chinese had arrested his attention at once.

Céleste glanced into the vestibule, and sprang from her seat, her large eyes opening so wide that they became positively round. "There is a man there, Madame! a Chinese!" she exclaimed; and at the same moment Granny entered hurriedly, calling to her daughter.

"Come, Jeanne! here is a man dressed like the Chinese figures on the screen, with a tail down his back! I cannot understand what he says; I think he speaks English; and he has a paper with our address written upon it. I do not understand——"

Madame André listened no longer after the word "Chinese" fell upon her ear. She quickly left her desk, ran across the room, and was at the door of the small vestibule before Madame Derville, who moved more slowly, could join her or ask a single question. "My husband!" she exclaimed, as she presented herself before the Chinaman, who stared at her with his oblique little eyes, as if not comprehending her words. He held out a paper, on which was written, "Madame André Derville, Brucourt." The writing was not that of the captain. "Have you no letter for me?" demanded the poor wife; but now her strength failed her, as she thought that this strange messenger had brought, in all probability, the confirmation of her

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worst fears. "Ah, my mother," she cried, as Madame Derville approached, "André never wrote this!" handing her the paper.

"And what is this?" asked the mother, always the more calm and self-possessed of the two. The Chinese was searching in a case made of red silk,—"embroidered like a shawl," as the children said afterwards,—and now gave a letter to Madame Derville. She took it, and looked at the address, but it also was written by a strange hand.

"You see!" said Jeanne, and she threw herself despairingly upon a seat.

The mother, pale as death, tore open the envelope. "He is alive!" said she; "this letter is dictated by him!"

"But he is ill!" cried Jeanne, not waiting to hear the letter read.

Marie leaned upon Madame André's shoulder, and listened sadly.

"Still, he is alive! and, please God, he *will* live!" repeated Madame Derville. "He has been wounded, —ill,—almost dying!" She paused, and closed her eyes for a moment; then, recovering herself, she said, cheerfully, "Come, Jeanne, we must welcome this messenger who brings such good news; let us bring him in and give him something to eat. We owe much to him, for I read here that he was kind to André, and nursed him during his illness;" and she added, as she finished the letter, "André says also that he is a Christian!"

"A Christian Chinese"! These words created an immense excitement among the children, who had

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gathered around the door. "A convert" from that heathen land, where a conversion to the Christian faith was so rare, and where a man who abandoned his ancient gods did so in peril of his life! It was indeed a wonderful thing, and all were disposed to accord a hearty welcome to the stranger.

Granny hastened to prepare refreshments, while Honorine, Céleste, and Edmée undertook to communicate with the messenger by venturing upon a few English phrases, which they pronounced very carefully and slowly. The Chinaman made signs of comprehending what they said, but was quite unable to express himself intelligibly in reply till his eye lighted upon the pen, ink, and paper which lay on a table in the room. With a look of supreme satisfaction, he began to write, in his broken English, as follows:

"Come from where captain is,—bring captain's letter to France. Me learn to speak French, and make business with French man. Captain says Cherbourg better than Paris,—more cheap." Here he looked inquiringly at the children, to see if they understood. Honorine smiled encouragingly, and he went on: "Captain very good,—very sick; wicked Chinese try to kill him because he Christian,—me Christian,—good Sisters killed,—church burned down." He wrote no more, but bowed his head, as if in shame, as he recounted the crimes of his countrymen.

He was evidently tired and hungry, and, now that his mission was accomplished, he gladly seated himself before the tray provided by Granny, and ate heartily, with the aid of two little ivory sticks which he produced from the pocket of his gown. The children

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stood around the table, staring with all their eyes. Marie and her mother had disappeared.

Granny dispatched a neighbor in all haste to summon Monsieur Brémont. Her usual readiness in all emergencies was at fault this time. "Madame Derville cannot speak English any more than I can," she said to herself; "besides, we ought to have a man here."

Her confidence in Monsieur Brémont's knowledge was unbounded; and she thought it not improbable that he might even be able to talk a little Chinese.

Meanwhile, Madame Derville had followed her daughter-in-law from the room where the Chinaman was eating, and together they went slowly and sorrowfully up-stairs. After the great effort of opening the letter, which she had felt must assure her of the life or the death of her son, all her courage and bodily strength seemed to fail her; and it was with infinite difficulty that she dragged herself into her own chamber. It was only by the support of Jeanne and Marie, who had noiselessly accompanied her grandmother, that she crossed the room and sank into her arm-chair. Still she strove to speak cheerfully: "He is alive!" she repeated; "and God has watched over him, else he would surely have died. And see," continued she, forcing a smile and holding out the letter to Jeanne, "the *dictated* letter comes to me!—the first one he is able to write with his own hand will be for you."

These words quickly healed the pang which was mingled with Madame André's joy in receiving the long-anticipated tidings. She had not yet heard the whole of the letter; but now, kneeling on a cushion at the side of the great arm-chair, she read as follows:

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"I have only strength to dictate a few lines to you, my dear mother, to tell you that I am alive and safely on board my ship, God be praised! I was leading an expedition on shore when the Chinese rose against the Christians,—no one knows why. The carnage was frightful; the missionaries and Sisters of Charity were killed, and their church burned to the ground. I was, with several others, taken prisoner, and we suffered, at the hands of our captors, such torments as could only have been devised by demons. Happily, we were soon released. The admiral threatened to bombard the town, and we were set free; the wretches will pay dearly for their victims. I have been at the point of death, unable even to dictate a letter, and I trust that no tidings will have reached you from the Bureau before the arrival of my good friend Wang, who will carry these lines. He is a convert, and nursed me faithfully; help him, if it be in your power. You will soon see me, for I shall return home on sick-leave so soon as I am strong enough to undertake the journey. Ah, I have feared many times that I should never again see my mother and my beloved Jeanne! Thank God with me!"

Madame André threw her arms round her mother-in-law and wept as she knelt beside her. "Oh, my mother," said she, "how he has suffered!"

Madame Derville looked out upon the sky, now bright and clear and illumined by the rays of the setting sun. "He says, 'God be praised!' 'Thank God with me!' 'God,' twice in a single page!" Marie covered her grandmother's hands with kisses. She did not seem to notice the child, but repeated, in a low tone, "Twice; my God, I thank thee!"

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CHAPTER XXVI.

WAITING.

THE burden of suspense, which for months had grown heavier and more insupportable every day, was now removed from two aching hearts; the wife and the mother could breathe freely once more. Monsieur Brémont succeeded in holding intelligible communication with Wang, and in making satisfactory business arrangements for him. He accompanied him to Cherbourg, and saw him successfully installed in a good commercial house. People wondered not a little at the arrival of the Chinaman in Brucourt in advance of the official reports of the Christian massacre, which finally appeared in the newspapers and fully confirmed the account sent by the captain.

A bulletin was forwarded from the department, in due official course, to the family at the Grange, which gave them the additional information, withheld by the chief actor in the expedition, that "Captain Derville was deserving of all praise for the devotion with which he had protected the Christians; he could have escaped and regained his ship without danger, but would not desert the missionaries and the helpless women. It was while defending them at the risk of his life, that he was made prisoner."

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Marie begged leave to copy this passage from the official document. She wrote it out carefully, and inclosed the precious scrap of paper in a little bag of white silk which she carried about with her wherever she went. "How I *shall* kiss and hug papa, when he comes home!" she said to herself, twenty times a day.

"When he comes home!" The time seemed very long, and it was harder to be courageous and hopeful now, when the cause for real anxiety was in a measure removed. The long interval of silence, which had been at first met with resignation, now seemed hard to endure even when a great joy was almost certainly in store for the waiting hearts. Time passed slowly away, and the captain did not arrive. "But he will soon be here," said his mother and his wife to all who came to ask for news of him. "He will be here, we think, as soon as a letter could reach us." So they said, hoping against hope; yet days became weeks, weeks passed into months, and still no letters! no captain!

Madame Derville succeeded only by determined effort in struggling against the utter hopelessness that was rapidly taking the place of every other feeling. Her daughter-in-law, less strong, and naturally despondent, had ceased to struggle. Her daily duties were still performed; certain hours were passed in preparing for and listening to recitations, and the scholars were not neglected in the school-room, or during their time of recreation. But all was done from a stern sense of obligation; there was no longer any pleasure in the daily task; and could she have followed the bent of her inclination, poor Madame André would have sat for hours and hours at the window overlooking the

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sea; doing nothing, saying nothing; scarcely thinking, even; all her senses and faculties seemed to be concentrated into simply *waiting*.

"It is a blessing that poor Jeanne *must* work," said Madame Derville, who no longer attempted to comfort or encourage; but Granny was disposed to lament that "the poor child has not even time to sit still and cry." "One can always find time to weep," thought Madame Derville, whose pillow was often wet with tears; "but when one is busily occupied every moment, there is no time to despair."

And every one was busy enough at the Grange. Three new pupils had been recently admitted, at the earnest request of their parents. Granny insisted on giving up her chamber for their accommodation, and had established herself in a great closet, opening from her daughter's room. "But for this arrangement," said she, "we should be forced to make a sleeping-room in the upper part of the barn, which could not be done without considerable expense; and André cannot have saved much money during his long illness in that strange country."

Madame Derville protested earnestly against Granny's plan, but finally yielded, for the money received from the new pupils would be a valuable addition to her income. They lived, and that was all; but she was thankful to be able to provide food and raiment for themselves and to give a little to the poor.

Verville was still a heavy charge, notwithstanding the efforts of Monsieur Brémont; and the small reserve fund, carefully kept for times of sickness, increased very slowly. Madame André used to say, "Marie and

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Jean will never be considered *grands partis!*" And their grandmother was almost ready to reply, "So much the better!" but Granny shook her head. She had a great dread of poverty.

The last days of February had now come; the sun rose earlier and set later; and, to distract her own and Madame André's thoughts from their agonizing suspense, Madame Derville frequently organized long expeditions on foot, in which all the household joined. These excursions were made in various directions, but the homeward walk brought the little party almost invariably to the sea-shore and into Verville. Madame Derville had always something to say to Cousin Michel, who had carried out his intention and was established in Jacques Guesnet's house. The little girls carried *bonbons* to the school-children, and sometimes a pair of knit socks to one of the old men; or there was a bundle of worn clothing, well mended by Granny and Madame André, to be distributed: in short, a pretext was never wanting for a visit to Verville, and no one complained when they came in sight of the familiar little cottages.

"Here we are again at Verville!" exclaimed Céleste, one day: "it is very well to say that 'all roads lead to Rome,' but we may say, 'all roads lead to Verville'!"

This rendering of the proverb became extremely popular, and "All roads lead to Verville!" was soon a favorite cry among the children.

One morning the walking-party set out very early, with the deliberate intention of going direct to Verville. It was the day after that on which a mail should have arrived; but no letters had been received; and

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Madame Derville and Jeanne, more impatient and restless than ever, determined to give the children a sort of picnic upon the shore; the weather was beautiful, the air soft and balmy; the willows were already green, and the hedges were gaily decked with the clustering hazel, now almost in flower. As they went through the coppice, one little girl discovered a few violets; they were pale, and not yet fully open, but they told of the coming of spring, and were eagerly gathered. Artémise, to whom belonged the honor of the discovery, was very proud of her treasure. She ran swiftly forward to join Madame Derville, who had been persuaded to ride upon Lucas's donkey.

"See, Madame!" cried Artémise; and, as "grandmother" admired the lovely little flowers, welcoming them as the first heralds of spring, the child placed them gently in her hand.

Madame Derville was about to refuse them; but she remembered how selfish and egotistical the little girl had once been,—how she had kept and eaten the mussels, unmoved by the self-denial of her companions,—and she appreciated the visible improvement. "Certainly Artémise has changed greatly during the year," she thought, and, accepting the violets, she also leaned towards the child, and kissed her affectionately. Artémise blushed with pleasure, and rejoined her companions in a state of profound delight.

The old donkey was laden with a well-filled basket of provisions, as Madame Derville did not choose to take Cousin Michel too entirely by surprise. The invading-party, carrying their own supplies, marched into his dining-room, and were heartily welcomed.

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Cousin Michel, who was engaged in teaching his little class, instantly abdicated in favor of Madame Derville, and positively refused to resume his seat. "No, no!" said he; "I am going to say lessons now: I sit there in the teacher's place all the week, and I need rest."

"You shall have a holiday this very day!" cried the children. "First of all, we are to eat our breakfast; and then Madame has promised to walk with us as far as the Red Rocks."

Vain hope! There were too many important affairs to be discussed; too many decisions to be made; too many sick people to visit.

So soon as breakfast was over, Madame Derville went into the school-room. "One hour," said she to Madame André, "to hear the children say their lessons, and another for my talk with Michel. Meanwhile, since your mother has come with us to-day, by way of something extraordinary, you will not be fatigued by the care of the children, and you had best walk with them to the Red Rocks. They can eat their lunch here, on your return, before we go back to Brucourt."

Madame André assented; the school-room door was closed, and the party set forth. Some of the children carried little baskets, hoping to find some shrimps in the pools of water left by the receding tide. They soon arrived within sight of the great piles of red granite called the Red Rocks, which were yet far distant; but, as this was a favorable spot for fishing, the children entered at once upon their sport; the whole party had been busily at work for two days previous, making nets to be used upon this occasion.

It was well that Madame André was not left alone to

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keep watch over the merry band; for the smallest chickens of her active brood strayed away every moment in different directions. The three new-comers, Louise, Ermence, and Marguerite, had never before made an excursion of this kind, and it was their very first experience in shrimp-fishing. Their companions, armed with their little nets, showed them how to throw these into the small pools of water, where were found basket-fish and crabs, but very few shrimps. The discovery of a single one was hailed with delight, and, as the sport became more and more exciting, the children ran hither and thither, laughing, shouting, tumbling over each other in their zeal, wetting their feet, and scarcely listening to the appeals of Granny and Madame André.

At last, after moving slowly down the shore, they arrived at the foot of the Red Rocks, which were almost covered with beautiful and rare varieties of sea-weed, of all hues and colors. The children immediately conceived the plan of arranging in an album a superb collection of different specimens, to be presented to the captain on his return home.

"Who knows," said Marie, in whose fertile brain the idea first arose, "but that we may find here some sea-plants which papa has never seen in all his voyages!" And, as her mother smiled rather incredulously, she continued, "At any rate, if he has seen them, I am sure he has never paid any attention to them."

"That is very possible," said Madame André; and she too began to gather the sea-weed with as much earnestness and care as Marie could desire.

"It will take *six* albums to hold it all!" cried

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Granny; but she could not calm the enthusiasm of the party, nor induce them to cease from their work.

The time passed so rapidly that Madame André was surprised to find, on looking at her watch, how late it was; and she called out, "Come, my children, we have stayed too long, and grandmother will be waiting for us. Are you all ready? Honorine! Céleste! Edmée! Artémise! Marguerite!"

As their names echoed among the rocks, the little girls replied and appeared, some from one hiding-place, some from another. The nets and baskets were gathered together.

"Now, are you all here?" repeated Madame André. But Louise and Ermence had not answered her call!

A sudden fear entered the hearts of the two mothers. They called loudly and often, and the children joined their voices in a shout, but there was no response.

"They are hiding," said Marie; "they want to jump out upon us just when we least expect them."

Madame André frowned at this suggestion, and called, in a loud, severe tone, "Louise! Ermence! I desire you to come to me at once!"

Two sea-gulls, perching for a moment high up on the cliff, uttered a hoarse cry, and sailed slowly through the air towards the sea. Instinctively, and without knowing why, Madame Piérard followed them with her eyes, and, as she saw the whitish line marking the flow of the tide upon the beach, she cried out, "Do not you see something moving away out yonder?"

All looked eagerly towards the sea; but, while some were sure they could distinguish moving objects, others could see nothing. Honorine declared she saw only

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two or three rocks. Madame André was very short-sighted; at Brucourt her telescope would have solved the difficulty, but now she could distinguish nothing at so great a distance. At last Marie, whose eyes had been riveted to the spot pointed out by Granny, cried, "Yes; it is they! I am sure of it. I can see them now running; but that very deep pond is between them and the dry sand, and they cannot cross it!"

What was to be done? The tide had commenced to rise, and every moment made the passage across the sands more difficult. The little pool which the two children had crossed easily and thoughtlessly, an hour before, was now swollen into a large pond, and very soon their return would be most dangerous, if not impossible.

"Take these little ones home, mamma," said Madame André, resolutely, gathering up her dress as she spoke; "I shall go and bring back the two children, while it is still possible to walk through the water; in another quarter of an hour one will be obliged to swim!"

Madame Piérard hesitated, and trembled, but insisted on going in her daughter's place, to join the imprudent children. Her words availed nothing; Madame André was already on her way, forbidding Marie, by a look she dared not disobey, to follow. It was, however, simply impossible for poor Granny to leave the spot with her little party: they were in no danger whatever; the rocks among which they stood were never washed by the sea, except during a storm or a very high spring tide. There they remained, therefore, anxiously watching Madame André, as she

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walked quickly away, hastening to join the two children, who now ran up and down by the side of the little lake which separated them from their companions, trying to find a way round it, and evidently bewildered and alarmed. They dared not venture into the water, yet they could already see behind them the line of white foam left upon the beach by the advancing waves.

"How fast mamma walks!" said Marie, who kept close to Granny's side, clasping her hand tightly. "If I were Louise, I should run forward into the water to meet her."

"If you were Louise, I hope you would not add a second act of folly to the first," replied Granny, more severely than Marie had ever before heard her speak. "And pray what would become of Ermence, who has even less wit than Louise, and is, besides, so delicate?"

Marie hung her head, and said nothing for a few moments; but when she ventured to resume her anxious watch, she suddenly cried out, in a tone of joy, "There is a man coming!"

In another moment her companions saw, with unspeakable relief, that a man was indeed approaching. He was apparently a shrimp-catcher; a three-cornered net hung over his shoulder, and a basket was fastened upon his back.

"He is quite young," said Madame Piérard to herself.

"He is strong!" cried Honorine, aloud, in her delight. "He can easily carry Ermence, and help Louise to walk through the water."

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"Oh, oh! mamma does not see him! She is stepping into the deep water!" shrieked Marie, throwing herself down upon the ground in utter desperation.

"Mamma! Mamma! Madame!" shouted all the children together, at the top of their voices. Madame Piérard uttered no cry, but stood, with her eyes fixed upon her daughter, praying silently to God.

The fisherman had seen, at some distance, Madame André on one side of the little lake, and the two children on the other, and, understanding their danger, was hastening with all speed to their assistance.

"See!" cried Marie, "he has thrown away his basket and his net! Now he is almost there! Ah, he is in the water! but mamma is in it also! And Louise——"

Louise had no more judgment in the emergency than Marie herself would have displayed under similar circumstances. She was terribly frightened, and, seeing Madame André coming to help her, the child's only thought was to run towards her deliverer, notwithstanding the imperative signs made by Madame André that she should remain where she was. The poor woman redoubled her efforts, but the water already reached her knees; a few more steps would carry her waist-deep; her skirts, heavy with water, dragged her back; but before her was the child, stretching out her arms and crying aloud in her terror. Suddenly, above the noise of the waves, she heard another sound, and in another instant the fisherman rushed past her, exclaiming, "Do not move another step forward; the water is deepest just here!" Almost before Madame André could comprehend his words, he had seized

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Louise in his arms; she was now fairly paralyzed by fright, and could not move, or even cry. He held her tightly, and with this heavy burden pressed on to join Ermence, who had remained on the farther side of the pond, and was now lying upon the sand, weeping bitterly. As the fisherman reached her and looked back, he saw Madame André, who had boldly followed in his steps.

"Do not think of carrying her!" said the man, seeing that this was Madame André's intention; "she can walk very well, if she chooses,—the water will not be up to her neck. But we must be quick!"

Madame André could not, in any case, have carried the little girl, for her own strength was nearly exhausted; but she helped her to keep her footing as they made their way across a more shallow piece of water; and finally, with the tide rushing in behind them, they regained a place of safety, and thankfully felt firm ground beneath their feet.

The fisherman, shaking the water from his clothing, placed Ermence safely by the side of Louise and turned away. Madame André tried in vain to express her gratitude; she had no longer strength to speak, and only a few indistinct words forced themselves from her parched lips.

The man begged her, by his gestures, to say no more. "It was nothing, madame; you have nothing to thank me for. If I am not mistaken, you belong to Madame Derville's family; and she has done far more for us at Verville."

He picked up his net and his basket, and resumed his labor of shrimp-fishing in the same pool, whose

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sparkling waters, beautiful as they looked in the bright sunshine, were even now terrible to Madame André.

"Again it is my mother who saves us, by God's help!" she said to herself, as she dragged herself slowly along,—a child in each hand, weary, exhausted, and almost frozen. But the little ones were so ashamed of their escapade, and so penitent, that they dared not complain.

It was a fact that there was not a single fisherman along the shore who would not have done as much for any one belonging to Madame Derville.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REUNION.

It was absolutely necessary to carry the two little "drowned people," as their companions called them, to Verville. Granny had taken Ermence into her arms, in spite of her old age and the child's weight; and, although she stumbled at every step, she would not relinquish her burden. Madame André's offer of assistance was peremptorily declined. "You can hardly drag yourself along," said her mother. And it was true. Honorine and Edmée joined hands and carried Louise on "the queen's cushion," as French children call it. When they grew tired, Marie and Céleste took their place; but they, poor children, were too small for the office of bearers. Louise's feet touched the ground, and the older girls were compelled to take up their load again. The walk to the village seemed interminable to the whole party.

Fortunately, Coralie had had a great baking in the morning, to supply not only Monsieur Brémont, but also a number of families who were furnished weekly with bread at his expense. The oven was still hot, and the wet garments and shoes were speedily placed inside it. Madame Derville proposed, jestingly, to put the two little girls there also. "It will dry them for the

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rest of their days," said she. Louise laughed, but Ermence was rather alarmed, and ran to Granny's side for protection. Madame Derville afterwards said, seriously, "You endangered, by your folly, not only your own lives, but the life of your teacher. Think of this; never act so imprudently again, and thank God that you were so quickly delivered from your peril."

This little speech was made to the two offenders alone, as they lay in Coralie's bed, snugly tucked under a warm blanket. They received the rebuke in silence, inwardly congratulating themselves that it was so short, and that no mention was made of any further punishment for their offense. Nothing more was said, however. Madame Derville never prolonged her reproofs; she saw that by their fright and discomfort they had already atoned for their fault, and that nothing would be gained by a protracted scolding. She insisted on their riding home upon the donkey's back, and kindly arranged the saddle so as to accommodate them both. It was growing late. Coralie had persisted in ironing the little girls' clothing before they were dressed again, and Madame André had great difficulty in persuading the good woman to bring her own dress to her without having ironed it also. All these delays consumed much time, and it was almost night when the party arrived at the entrance of the town.

"Malvina was in a hurry to light the lamp this evening," said Granny, as they came within sight of the Grange, and saw the windows illuminated by a reddish light. "Perhaps it is only the fire-light, however, from the parlor," she added; but exclaimed, almost instantly, "No! there is a light in the dining-room,

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and in Madame Derville's room also! What can it mean? Can Malvina have heard already of our adventure, and lighted up all the rooms to celebrate the escape of these half-drowned people?"

Madame Derville made no reply, but quickened her pace. She walked so fast that Madame André said to herself, "It is easy to see that grandmother has not been in the water to-day, and is not weighed down by a heap of damp skirts, as I am." She was so utterly exhausted that only by a violent effort could she move at all; but in the next moment she found strength. She did not walk or run, she flew, towards the open door of the Grange, trying, as she sped along, to see through the gloom and shadows which rendered all objects indistinct to her vision. In spite of the darkness, she had seen, standing in that open door, the figure of a man, and her heart assured her that it was no other than her husband!

She far outstripped all the rest, and was the first to reach him. He received her in his arms, and had carried her into the school-room, before Madame Derville, breathless, but with a shining, joyful face, laid her hand on the latch of the closed door. She held back Marie, who would have rushed after her mother. "Let them have one moment alone!" said the unselfish mother; then, quietly and calmly, she entered the room, with Marie clinging to her arm.

Jean stood at the kitchen door, shouting, "Papa! Papa!" He had run away to hide on the captain's appearance, and refused to kiss or look at him; but very soon, according to Malvina's report, he remembered all that his mother had taught him, and began

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to call out for "papa," showing to Malvina at the same time the portrait of his father, which hung over Madame André's bed.

Malvina was very proud of having been the first to receive the new-comer, and gave an elaborate account of her surprise, and of the conversation between herself and the captain.

The little girls listened eagerly to her description of the interview. "He said to me, 'Is this the Grange? is this where Madame Derville lives?' I answered, 'Yes, monsieur. Do you wish to see her? She has gone with the whole family to the sea-shore.' And then he said, 'I am Captain Derville.' And you can guess I threw down everything and ran to find Jean!"

After a little while, Madame Derville opened the door of the school-room, looking bright and happy, though her eyes showed traces of tears. She called eagerly for Madame Piérard. "Where is Granny?" said she.

The children ran to find her, and reported that she was shut up in her own room. Notwithstanding her genuine goodness, she was very sensitive to real or fancied neglect, and, feeling that she had been forgotten in the general rejoicing, she had taken refuge in her solitary little chamber.

Madame Derville went to seek her, guessing at her momentary ill-humor, but not appearing to notice it at all. "Jeanne can see and think of no one but her husband," said she, gaily. "Would you believe it? she actually forgot to ask him whether he had seen Jean! She is so happy, poor child, after all her anxiety and suspense."

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Granny was conciliated, and hastened to give her son-in-law a hearty welcome, no longer wondering that she had been for a moment forgotten.

Jean ran to meet her; he was very hungry, but no one had thought of supper. Granny trotted into the kitchen, and found that Malvina had made no preparations whatever, so excited and bewildered was she by the grand commotion in the house. "But for me," thought Granny, "André would have but a poor idea of our housekeeping! Fortunately, as he has just come from China, he will not be very particular."

With the exception of the children, who were in a starving condition after their long fast, no one seemed to take much heed of the supper when it finally appeared.

"*I* am eating my wife and my children," said the captain, when his mother reproached him for not doing justice to the repast. The little girls stared in utter astonishment.

Madame Derville left her daughter-in-law in free possession of the field. Satisfied in having her son restored to her, and happy in seeing the serene, contented expression of his countenance, she patiently waited her turn to receive his confidence and the recital of his adventures. "How impatient I should have been once!" she thought, as she heard, through the thin partitions of the old house, the murmuring sound of an interminable conversation. "I should have insisted on having my share of him immediately! Now, I can wait with composure. What a blessing it is that, in growing old, one grows patient also!" And she smiled.

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Marie, however, found it no easy task to be patient. She poured out her trouble to her grandmother, in whose room she was obliged to sleep. "Mamma's door is still closed," she said, discontentedly, as she seated herself on Madame Derville's bed, very early the next morning. "I hardly saw papa last night, and could not talk with him at all!"

"Our turn will come," replied her grandmother, cheerfully. And it was with Marie on her knee that she received her son's embrace, when he came in to wish her good-morning. "This child pretends that she has not even seen her father yet!" said she, motioning to him to take Marie in his arms.

The little girl was radiantly happy when she led him into the dining-room. He desired to be presented to each pupil individually. Marie began, gravely, "This is Honorine, the tallest of all; and this is Edmée; and this is Artémise; and here are Louise and Ermence, who were drowned yesterday;" and so on, naming each one, until she came to Céleste. Then she drew her father to one side, and said, in a low voice, "She is my best friend; but you must not tell the others, lest they should be jealous."

Céleste threw her arms round the captain's neck, as if she had known him all her life. "I see that she is to be my friend also," said he; which remark made Marie laugh so heartily as to wake Jean; he had slept late, after the excitement of the previous evening, and Granny found it hard to comfort him for the loss of his morning nap.

There was a constant succession of visitors at the Grange during the whole day. The dignitaries of the

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town all came to welcome the captain and to congratulate him upon his return to his native land. Monsieur Brémont appeared early in the morning. The news had already spread to Verville. Tranquille had contrived to catch a glimpse of the captain, and assured the people that his wrists still showed the marks of the ropes with which the Chinese had bound him. "And they wetted the ropes every hour, that it might hurt him still more!" said Tranquille. "The surgeons feared it would be necessary to cut off both his hands, on account of their being so much injured. The Chinese dragged him along the road in a cart half filled with nails and bits of iron; he had scarcely any clothes left, and was covered with blood from head to foot. And the wretches gave him neither food nor water! What monsters those Chinese are! It is a miracle that he is alive!"

"It is because his mother prayed for him so much," said a fisherman's wife. "God always listens to such prayers as hers."

It was not until the evening, twenty-four hours after his arrival, that the captain found himself at last alone with his mother. They talked long together. He told of all the dangers through which he had passed, and of the sufferings he had endured. She listened almost in silence, with her hand resting affectionately upon his shoulder. At last he said, lowering his voice, "You may imagine, my mother, how strange it was to find myself on the eve of becoming a martyr! To die for the Christian religion, when one is so poor a Christian as I——" He hesitated, but continued, after a moment's pause: "But, my mother, it was good for me:

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I have not come back as I went. I have asked God's pardon, and I understand now many things which you used to say to me, and which made little impression on me at the time."

His mother leaned towards him, and imprinted a tender kiss upon his brow. "Then, it was only I who spoke to you, my son. Now, God has spoken, and you have listened." And as she sank back into her arm-chair, and watched the flickering of the fire upon the hearth, she repeated softly to herself the words of the patriarch Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

"Jeanne," said the captain, a few days later, "is there not something in the Bible about the virtuous woman?"

She turned to the last chapter of the Proverbs, and handed the book to her husband; he read it in silence. When he had finished, he said, "It is the exact portrait of my mother. Surely her children 'rise up and call her blessed.'"

"And her grandchildren also," replied Jeanne, deeply affected. "Marie will feel through her whole life the influence which her grandmother has exercised upon her during these years we have passed together. Sometimes I allow myself to hope that the child will be like her. Oh, that voyage! that voyage! I dreaded, I wept over it, but it has brought to us unspeakable blessings!"

"Yes, God does all things well," said the sailor; adding, simply, "even when he makes use of such means as the Chinese."

THE END.

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